

A L M I R A.

BEING THE HISTORY

OF A YOUNG LADY

Of good Birth and Fortune, but more
distinguish'd Merit.

VOL. II.



L O N D O N :

Printed for W. OWEN, near Temple-Bar.

M.DCC.LXII.

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Vol. 2

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T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F
A L M I R A.

 T was matter of diversion, to observe the wonder visible in the good woman of the house, as they passed by her, on seeing those two ladies in the place of her two gentlemen;—but Amanda stepped aside, and kindly slipped a piece of gold into her hand; and, smiling, told her, her kinsmen would have no more occasion for her lodgings, as she had now prevailed on them, to take up one with
Vol. II. B her,

her, for the remainder of their stay in Hertfordshire, which would now be but short.

Fidelio met them at his gate; where he was waiting, with his usual pleasure and impatience, to receive his loved Amanda. But he found his joy augmented, in the sight of all those welcome guests.

They were no sooner seated, than he asked his spouse, what she had done with Bellmont? For, he could assure her, his company would have been no less agreeable than theirs.

Florello readily (as for himself) avowed the same; and said, it was unkind in him, if he could any way have disengaged himself, to leave his joy imperfect. Telling Fidelio, that he was more indebted to that gentleman, than he could ever pay sufficiently.

Amanda intimated, by a look to her Fidelio, that it was a secret still who Bellmont was. And then again reappeared,

ed, that sudden business had indeed occasioned his departure; but that he had assured her, when he went, of this, That nothing should deprive him of being present on a certain day, (she would not mention) whenever it came; and adding, he might conclude, something of no small consequence had called him so abruptly: and, as he left him (he knew) so soon to fall into the ablest hands, his presence could, he said, be better spared.

Dinner was then brought in, (at which there followed a variety of general topics foreign to our present purpose, and particular congratulations needless to relate) which being ended, it was mutually agreed, that they should all set out next day for London, with Almira.

But Florello would not be satisfied, till he had prevailed on her, with Fidelio and Amanda, to accompany him home to tea; that he might introduce her as the mistress of his health, and empress of his wishes! to a father, whose happiness, he knew, so much depended upon his,—that he had only kept this secret

(of his despairing passion for Almira), from him, he said, while he was void of hope; for fear of making him a sharer in his sufferings. — But that his mother's turn of temper (as his two good friends, there, knew) needed not such sort of care, could she have known it singly; tho' there, indeed, was something in her disposition that repulsed his confidence: nor did she ever choose to shew so great a share of the parental tenderness, as she might, notwithstanding, probably, have for him. But let all melancholy thoughts subside, in sense of our present bliss! continued he; and let me now attend you.

Almira and Amanda would gladly have been excused making this visit;— giving for their reason, that as their journey was so near, they had no time to spare.

Florello begg'd them not to exclude him from their company; as he intended to be ready likewise, to attend them in that journey.

But,

But, as Cleone promised to make their objections easy, if she might be excused accompanying them, that afternoon; adding, that she would see all orders executed, they should think necessary, in their absence, if she might be favoured with their particular commands. Amanda thankfully complied to it; and she, Fidelio, and Florello, drove directly to the house of Bellmore.

He, when they alighted, was reading in the parlour, into which Florello led Almira only (his other friends remaining in another room) and so attentively, that till his son's known voice accosted him, as follows, he saw not who was near him.

Permit me, my dear sir, cry'd he, in this fair lady, to present to you the most inestimable jewel heaven or fortune ever yet bestowed! one who was found, and lost! yet now is sent again to bid me still live on; to praise, and bless in you, the best of parents! who first gave that life, which she, and only she, has kindly

now preserved; when, for her only, it was almost lost. Receive her as my bride; tho' I have yet no right of law, indeed, to call her such; but there remains now only your consent, to crown my title to that happy expectation.

If that be all, my son (cry'd Bellmore, raising him with tender eager haste, who kneeled upon one knee before him) be happy to your utmost wish, my child! Then turning to Almira, as Florello held her hand, he took the other, and bowing to her with a graceful smile, of happy satisfaction, said, And is it to this heavenly form, I owe the preservation of my boy! Well, madam, I will not grudge to be indebted for so high an obligation, to one, whose face seems quite expressive of such goodness; and may heaven for ever bless you for it! and may he live to recompence your merit. For such, as is not often met with, I am certain you must be the mistress of, or else Florello's happiness could not depend on you. And I require to know no more, but wish there may be room for me to prove, how much

much I think myself obliged and happy, in being allied to only virtuous excellence !

He then desired her to sit down, but first embraced them both, and placed his son next to her, looking with pleasure on him : and then, crying to her, Why, madam, you have almost wrought a miracle ! 'Twas you, I'm certain, sent to us this prosperous physician, whom we last consulted, or he was one of your good angels, for he brought surely blessings with him !

But now, the overjoy'd Florello, telling him his friends, Fidelio and Amanda, were in the next room, he ran o meet them with the speed of youth ; so greatly had his son's amended state of health and mind invigorated him.

The good old gentleman seem'd still much more delighted, when he found Amanda was her friend ; (he having always conceived the highest opinion of that lady's judgment) and when he had feated them, and welcom'd them obli-

gingly, he went to inform his spouse Bellona, of all that had so pleasingly affected him. But by the melancholy visible in him on his return, it gave all who were present reason to believe, there had been words between them, not the most agreeable to him; tho' he had the politeness to endeavour to conceal that truth (a delicacy, that is not always to be seen, on such occasions, in the married state) he made the best apology he could, for her not giving them her company; and pleaded an indisposition (that was only, in reality, seated in her temper.)

However, Amanda was no stranger to her; nor was Almira, to her character: and Bellmore's conversation and behaviour amply atoning for the want of hers, they spent their visit to the mutual satisfaction of all parties present; but were obliged to make it shorter than Florello wished they would, by reason they intended to set out early the next morning.

Fidelio

Fidelio begg'd Florello earnestly to accept of a place in his coach, as he insisted he should be his guest, during his stay in London.

Bellmore (who had before been told by his son of their intended tour) return'd his civilest acknowledgments for his obliging offer; adding, that he could then rest satisfied, as he should know his dear Florello would want no sort of care, that might be necessary, in his much weaken'd state of health. Tho', who would think, my friends, (continued he) that he had been so bad, as he indeed has been, to see him now? He only looks, methinks, somewhat genteeler, as well as fairer, for it.

O madam (turning towards Almira) who, to look on you, would think you were so dangerous a lady! since sweetness and humanity, not cruelty, is most apparently your disposition; or you have eyes, and features, that conspire to be the most deceitful!

Florello's

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Florello's joy danced to his eyes at this ; first looking towards her, with a look inspired with triumphant love ; and then upon his father, with the declining modest beams of duteous gratitude ! But then, they parted for that night.

His restless lids, however, were ready (willingly) to open with the next morning's dawn ; and he was at Fidelio's before one of them were awake, except the servants only. But as Amanda told him, when she came down, love gives the swiftest wings to all the hopes, fears, feet, and imaginations, of its faithful votaries ! And he had walk'd, part of the way, with only leaning on his servant.

A hasty breakfast being over, they set out for London, in the following manner.

Amanda and Almira, with Cleone and Florello, in the coach and four ; Fidelio (having complimented our young lover with his seat there) rode on horseback, as did his son, Amintor ; one
servant

Servant likewise rode, and Florello's man attended them behind the coach.

The fairness of the day contributed to make their journey more delightful, and having got to London early in the afternoon, they all alighted at Fidelio's house, and there drank tea: and then, Florello would have waited on Almira to her aunt, but she replied, she thought it would be more proper for her to see her first alone; therefore she went soon after home, leaving them a promise, that she would return to supper. And Florello earnestly, tho' modestly, asserted, that while her virtues prompted her to pay so charitable a regard to the defects and miseries of others, he must insist upon her taking the due care of innocence and excellence! And therefore she must pardon him, if he used his best endeavours to oppose her being too much there; without permitting either himself, or those obliging friends, to keep her company.

However, she would then suffer no one of them, besides Cleone, to attend her;

her; (but she did not let her go up to see Crudelia, at the first interview.) Almira found her in bed, and bathed in tears; which, she was told, most dreadful agonies had just preceded; arising not from pain alone, of body, but visible despair!

The moment she beheld Almira at her bedside, she made a motion, that her nurse and maid should leave the room. Then, looking upon her, with eyes at once beseeching pity and forgiveness, thro' a ghastly glare of horror, she try'd to raise herself from off her pillow, to embrace her; crying at the same time, And can you, my dear niece, forgive me, I never can myself! You do, I find you do, or else I had not been so blest to see you! yet, I am sure you cannot!

Almira begged her to compose herself, and think no more on what was past than might conduce to make her mind more easy; and that her only motive for desiring further, or at all,

to name it was, that it might effect that happy end.

My dearest Mira (returned Crudelia wildly, snatching and grasping hard her hand in hers) that is impossible; your goodness casts a blacker dye on all my guilt, and unjust usage of you: I shall, I fear, be irrecoverably lost! O! let me have your prayers, as well as generous pardon.

She then began upon the subject of the letter, and discovered to Almira what has been here before related, concerning the particular place and time she wrote it in, &c. confessing (with a shower of repentant tears) her motive for so doing; her view of interest in marrying her to her son; and many more particular and general confessions of repentance. Adding, with a heart-rending sigh, I feel too late my error! heaven grant my child may not, hereafter, likewise feel its punishment! I have fulfilled, in nothing yet, the last request of thy dear father; and the best of brothers he was to me! Let me, while this small time remains,

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remains, make haste to do it. Then, pointing to a casket on the table by her bed-side, she bid her take it into her care immediately, and then with difficulty, taking the key belonging to it out of her pocket (that was beneath her pillow) she gave it her, saying, In that, my dear, are all those papers (of much consequence) which belong to you; and some, which I have kept you (and not only you) much longer than I ought, a stranger to. But I have more to say concerning this, but cannot now. Alas! how base a thing is avarice! and yet how justly does it turn its point to its own breast at last! I feel it all here! — beating her hand (hard clinch'd) with violence against her bosom. Which (added to the horrid look and manner) so much startled and affected Almira, that she sent forth so loud a shriek, that those attendants who waited in another room, run in immediately, thinking their mistress was expiring. They, perceiving Almira to be so much shocked (tho' ignorant of the cause, as to the blow; only they saw her aunt in agonies, such as they had seen her in before) begged her

her to quit the room, till she was more composed; which she consented to.

She found Flavillo waiting in the dining-room, for her coming out, and Cleone, only, with him. Who, having told him that his cousin was with his mother, he begged he might have some little time to talk with her in private. Which, his dejected, and much altered humble manner of requesting (when he saw Almira) moved her to consent to; tho' not without some small reluctance, from former recollections: and Cleone, going on purpose up to her apartment, he began to this effect.

He told her, he had greatly injured her, in several respects, tho' his unhappy mother (he was sorry to be obliged to say) was the first cause of his so doing. And then (intreating her to pardon him) discovered to her in what manner he had deceived Crudelia, about the jewels, &c. which has been before related. Adding, that he had drawn himself into the sad necessity of joining crime to crime (a case too common) to ward off a displeasure

pleasure that he feared the consequence of. But, that those fears were now but secondary with him; that he was married, some few days before, and had intended to have kept it intirely a secret to his mother; as it was visible to all, her time was now but very short; he having but a little fortune with his wife, a circumstance, that he had cause to fear, would much offend her. But, that a strange (tho' seemingly a trifling) accident, had determined him, on all events, to make his marriage known to her directly; for he, in short, from thinking himself one of the most happy men alive, he was become the wretchedest! and from so foolish a foundation, as an idle dream, his wife had dreamed, the three succeeding nights after his wedding; which had impressed her mind so strongly, that now he found his happiness or misery, as well as hers, depended on his mother's knowing of it.

Almira begged to hear the circumstances of so powerful a dream, that could have proved so fatal to their peace.

Flavillo

Flavillo then began, and gave the following account of it.

Upon our wedding night, as soon as she had closed her eyes to sleep, a gentleman, whose form was quite unknown to her, came and drew open wide the curtains of her bed; his side, next to her, seemed much wounded; and, with a look of grief and anger, heightening into fury, he looked some minutes earnestly upon her; then, shaking solemnly his head, three times, his eyes burst into tears of blood, which in a moment covered her! While, with a threatening attitude, and voice of horrid sternness, he cry'd out aloud, 'Tis so far well; take care, persist, I charge thee! meet not ever, or return thy husband's love! nor (tomorrow) waste one hour, till thou hast seen his, and thy mother.

The horror, she has three nights waked in, cannot be reported, out of this horrid dream! tho' my Olinda, will have it only called a dreadful vision! — And you, my dearest cousin, are the

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only person who can, with proper prudence, break the story of my marriage to her.

She will, I am assured, refuse you nothing, from what I have lately heard. Nor will your tender heart, I am sure, decline to beg for us her blessing and forgiveness.

Almira told him, that all within her power, in this affair, to serve him, he might depend upon. Tho', added she, perhaps you'll wonder to hear I am as superstitious as your spouse; for I am much alarmed for you indeed, and shudder at this dream.

This news, alas, will come to her in an unhappy time! who seems scarce able to bear more, than she at present suffers.

Flavillo sighed, and answered, that he knew it all; yet she might bear it better than they thought, perhaps, her sickness having (as he had been told) made a great alteration in her way of thinking.

Just

Just then, Cleone came in hastily, and told Almira, she must again attend her aunt, for she had called incessantly upon her, ever since she left the room, nor could her servants pacify her.

Flavillo hearing that, again renewed his before-named request; crying, for heaven's sake, madam, loose no time in this; it may be precious now, she may not live till morning.

Almira went directly to her; and Crudelia shewed the utmost joy and satisfaction, that her strength allowed of, at the sight of her. Again, she bid her nurse and maid retire, till call'd; and, in faint whispers, pointed, that her niece should sit down by her.

I had forgot, my dear, said she, to tell you, before I frightened you away just now, that I would see Florello: Where is he, have you seen him lately? Or, has my wicked scheme fallen heavy on him?—I am no stranger to the sad effect it had on you, while you refused

to see him ; and I overheard enough to be assured you loved him, and intended soon to make him yours.

If he still suffers for my cruel fault, I cannot rest till you restore him to your favour ; for now I know, and likewise own, he best deserves you.—How has partiality misled me, O Flavillo ! hadst thou been like him, I might have had less sin to answer for on thy account.

Almira took that opportunity to manage the displeasing task before her ; she therefore told her aunt, that she had heard, indeed, Florello's life had been in danger, from his taking it so much to heart, that she had, since that unhappy letter, broke off all intimacy with him ; which she had done, as thinking him unworthy.

But, if she would oblige her by a promise, of granting one request of hers, she would engage to see him soon, and make that easy to her, as it so much affected her,

Crudelia,

Crudelia, without once hesitating, promised it ; and said, Thou canst not ask me any thing. I am sure, but what I ought to grant : I have ever known thy virtues, tho' I have hitherto, alas, but ill rewarded them ! Now, tell me what it is ?

You must, return'd Almira, let me, madam, bring my cousin Flavillo (who is lately married) and his wife, to beg your blessing.

They confess their fault, in the rash step they have taken, in not asking your consent : but unless you pardon him, and her, he will be lost in wretchedness, thro' the remainder of his life.

On hearing this she started, and remained some moments silent and confounded. But presently casting her eyes towards heaven, with unexpected resignation, she reply'd, 'Tis mighty well ; at least, I know 'tis just ! may all my punishments be here !—O Mira ! something like this, I have indeed expected

from him for a considerable time. He did, I own, one while deceive me greatly. — Yes, I will see them; I myself, who stand in need so much of pardon, dare not refuse it others.

Then (with a sigh) she asked, whom has he married? tell me all, my dear, I am prepared to bear it: is she a person of either virtue, family, or fortune?

Almira answered, that she in truth had never seen her; nor yet knew her name, or other circumstances; being but just then informed, of that she had mentioned. — But then, the doctor who attended her, entered the room; and softly told Almira, before he went away, her aunt required only rest; which he should order something to procure for her, if possible. And he begged she might not be disturbed by any person's talking too much with her; for her recovery depended on composure.

But, before Almira left her, she said, Tell that unhappy wretch of mine (my dear good Mira) that he may to-morrow,

row, bring her to me. But tell him likewise, that to your undeserved good nature, he must remember, he greatly owes my clemency, towards this worst act of disobedience in him. Nor will I see them, if they come alone : you, my best child, shall come with them ; I charge you do : for I have now no other comfort left me, but what the sight of thee affords me.

Flavillo waited for his cousin, with fearful apprehension on his features ; but was delighted to be told how soon he might expect a pardon, on which so much depended ; and he almost flew home with joy, to tell his bride.

Almira, and Cleone, hastened to Amanda ; where Crudelia, and her miseries, served for the greatest part of their discourse that evening ; her niece being so much affected by her, that she could talk of nothing else.

Florello told her, he desired he might have likewise leave to see her aunt to-morrow ; to prove himself, if not so

amiable a christian, as he saw and owned she was; yet, one who could forgive an injury, (which there were some of those he knew could not.) Tho', added he, there is I think but half the merit in so doing, when the suffering is over: how I should have behaved, while under it, I dare not say, as I had not that trial.

Then I will answer for you, cry'd Fidelio. like the pure gold you would have passed that trial too, or I am much mistaken, and less acquainted with you, than I really think I am.

They parted quickly after supper; for the journey, tho' a small one, had visibly fatigued Florello. Yet, as Almira ordered a hackney coach (imagining Fidelio's horses must be tired, tho' both Amanda and her spouse would have insisted on her having theirs) he would conduct her and Cleone home in it; when, seemingly, he stood much more in need of being led himself, than to attempt the leading of another; he having more, in fact, recovered spirits yet,

yet, than strength.—He, when he left them, said, that the next morning early he should visit them.

But when Almira and Cleone rose, and went down to breakfast, they found there, first, Flavillo and his spouse.—He introduced her to his cousin, with the humility of conscious obligation: but the dejected countenance of that young gentlewoman, ill bespoke the bride.

She was not disagreeable, nor was she handsome; but had something of a melancholy in her look, mingled with misery, which was expressive of the dream. To that alone Almira could attribute it.

During their breakfast (of which they hardly could prevail on her to taste) she could be seldom heard to answer any thing they said occasionally to her.—A fearful kind of tremor, seemed to have suddenly seized on her nerves, so strongly, that it shook her frame like a strong ague; which her spouse perceiving, he jumped up, and turning towards his cousin, cried, with a sigh, recovered by a hem,

hem, Methinks I wish this over ; come, madam, shall we wait upon you now ?

Almira then desired Cleone, to go and see if she was stirring ; and, if she was, to give her notice of their coming. And she, presently returning, told them, Crudelia then expected them ; and likewise seemed to have had a better night than usual, by her voice, and what the nurse had told her.

On hearing this, they all (except Cleone) hastened to her apartment ;—Almira leading them the way ; and she was, of the three, the most composed indeed, tho' not intirely so ; but her concern was only charitable sorrow, unaccompanied by fear or guilt.

It will not be improper here, to mention, that Flavillo had not seen his mother for some time before ;—she having sharply reprimanded him, on finding plainly, that he must have deceived her, on his cousin's account : which quarrel being over-heard by one of the maid-servants, she had told it to Cleone.

Almira

Almira went to her bedside, and signified to her, that she had obeyed her orders; adding, Here are my cousins, madam, come to pay their duty to you.

Crudelia then gave order, that the servants should withdraw themselves; and next, desired her niece to pull open her curtains: when they both immediately approached her bed, and kneeled.

She, seeing her daughter most in tears, then turned her eyes upon her son, and cried, 'Tis you, my son, alone should weep! a stranger could not so much injure me, who owed me no obedience. But I forgive you. Rise! and may ye both be happier than your mother.

She then (desiring Almira's help) rose up a little, to salute them with maternal tenderness;—kindly reaching out her hand to bring them nearer to her. And just then the sun pointed so strongly on them, from the window, and on the bed, that Almira, seeing her eyes some moments earnestly fixed upon her daughter,
(and

(and then her head averted in a frightened manner, suddenly starting back, thought it was the excess of light affected her. But, in an instant again, she turned, and looked more earnestly; then started into horrid screams! and fell directly into violent convulsions.

All were astonished, at this shocking sudden change! and the more so, as she appeared, but just before, so well to bear this trial. But concluded, it had proved too powerful for her spirits, weak as she then was.

However, it was not long before she seemed recovering from her fit; and Olinda, having her hand in hers, was hanging over her with much immotion, when Crudelia's eyes suddenly opened upon hers, and instantly she snatch'd her hand away from her, with violence that shook the bed: and, casting upward her two ghastly beams, with both her hands which were wrung hard together, she cried out, O! heaven! O! horror! horror! Death have mercy on me! murder not my everlasting soul! O spare me!

save

save me ! save me now ! for this de-
 stroys too fast for mortal patience ! Yet
 let me look onde more, and hope that I
 may be mistaken.

She then looked stedfastly again upon
 her ; and, with hasty trembling fingers,
 (rising softly from her pillow) tore aside
 Olinda's handkerchief ; and, bending
 down her head close to her breast, seem'd
 looking on a mole, which then appeared
 upon her bosom of an unusual size, with
 an attentive examination. Then, in the
 same minute, she pushed her with great
 fury from her ; and cried out aloud,
 Away ! away ! for-ever from me ! thou
 incestuous monster ! O my boiling brain !
 and scorching conscience ! 'Twill con-
 sume us all together !

The astonished pair stood speechless,
 looking upon each other ; when Almira
 (trembling likewise with amazement ;
 thinking, from what she had heard, her
 brain indeed was touched) cried out,
 For heaven's sake ! madam, tell me, what
 has made this sudden alteration, if you
 are sensible of any thing I say to you ?

Crudelia

Crudelia looked with tenderness (tho' agonized) on her; and then burst into such a flood of tears, as if her soul was struggling that way to get free, from misery that seemed too sharp for human nature to sustain.—See there! (cried she) my daughter! my own daughter! my son's wife! see there she is, returned from death, to scourge adultery with incest! see, nature mark'd her cheek, while in the womb, to prove the explanation and horror of my guilt and punishment! Those deadly marks, you see, of never-dying shame, her guilty father caused; he threw those black, those dreadful grapes,—look on them there, (for one that patch has cover'd) and pity me, if possible, Almira! In sport he threw them then against my face; but they at last have reached my heart! They should have reached it sooner, from reflecting only on an injured husband's wrongs.

But tell me, thou Olinda, that is thy miserable name, how long hast thou been called to life again? poor wretch of my
creat-

creating ! Or, if indeed, thou never hast been dead, as thou wert hoped to be, why didst thou not, before this dreadful hour, make thyself known to me ? to save thyself, thy husband, and a dying mother, from this heavy load of most unpardonable sin ! Go, hide thyself from me, and from thyself if that were possible ; thy husband hide thyself for-ever from ! and all the world. I dare not look upon thee ; yet I would pity thee ; but I have none to spare, and I abhor myself too much, alas ! to love my crimes, or their sad consequences. O justice ! thou indeed, at last, hast reach'd my soul ! and judgment soon must follow !

Flavillo fell again upon his knees before her, shocked, and hardly able to reply to what he had heard ; and begg'd that she would try to calm her mind some moments, and attend to what, he hoped might, in some measure, soften such extream calamity ! if such it was, as he had heard. — If this, said he, can be my sister, I am indeed a wretch ! and one dark act of disobedience, has drawn
down

down another upon me. Yet, I am not so black as I appear to be. Olinda's natural modesty, or some kind overruling power, or happy fate, has saved us from the deeper dreadful sin of incest! Yes, madam, we are innocent of that; and I must now bless that reluctance, in her prophetically-virtuous nature, which I before misconstrued for indifference. Let this give comfort to you; nor will I ever think of her again, be assured, but as a sister.

This seemed a little to lend new life and hope to the afflicted mother: while the no less afflicted wife, oppressed with grief, beyond her strength to bear, had fainted, unobserved, in a great chair, wherein she had thrown herself to give a loose to tears, on the above-named discovery.

Crudelia seeing that, desired them to comfort her, and lend her their assistance. And when she was recovered, she called her to her, with a voice of tender melancholy only; and after she had kiss'd her, with a sigh, she cry'd, I find,
Olinda,

Olinda, we are not quite so lost; thy virtue has somewhat preserved us. Live, my child, in constant prayer, and thanks, to that all-seeing providence, who only could preserve that virtue in thee. Pray likewise, for the sins of her, who very soon must go to give in her too long account. Yet let me first hear from thee, how, till this fatal time, thou hast been nourished, for these eighteen years, for thou wert lost at nurse when only three years old; tho' in what manner I could never know: some accident, it was thought, had ended thee; for there were rivers, bogs, and ponds, near the poor woman's house, to whom thou hadst been sent, far off, upon a lonely common. Alas! I have not had, I own, a virtuous mother's love for thee.

Olinda sighed, and wept; and then told her, that she should have been, till then, a stranger to her birth, but for one lucky accident her life had met with. For she was kept, till ten years old, by an impostor, who said she was her mother; with whom she had gone begging about the country. But that a good lady

took, one day, a fancy to her, at her door, and bought her of the woman (to whom, notwithstanding, she allowed the liberty to come and see her child, as often as she pleased.)

That this woman, quickly afterwards, finding herself dying, sent for her, and told her, if she would promise not to discover what she would tell her (lest it should hurt her with the lady) she would own a secret to her; and then told her, she was not her mother: but had, in travelling the country, far from where she lived, found her at play, and stole her from a door, upon a common.— This, Olinda said, she had never mentioned before, to any person living.

That this lady (who had bought her) having died two years ago, left her five hundred Pounds; and she became acquainted with Flavillo by going to a milliner's, with whom that lady used to deal, and with whom she had worked since her good friend's decease.

That

That she had brought her up in her religion (that of the Roman church) and she would now forever quit the world, and enter into a religious house abroad, to make, if possible, atonement for her crime; tho' it was one that was, indeed, committed innocently.

Crudelia seemed more pleased, than might have been expected, at the latter part of this discourse, and blessed Olinda for it, in the warmest manner, often. And it was not long before the reason was made manifest to those about her; for, finding herself just going, she desired a Romish priest (and not a church of England minister) might instantly be sent for: and she acknowledged to her niece and children, that she had, almost ever since her marriage, professed that faith: that she was made a convert to it by Bargrave, Olinda's father, who was a jesuit; and he had absolved her from the crime he was the cause of, upon her changing her religion for his. But died soon after, of a wound got in a duel with her husband; who discovering his func-

tion, and growing uneasy at his frequent visits (being averse to that religion) had challenged him, and run him thro' the body. But that it never was made known, by his desire upon his death-bed, who had killed him. Tho' the grief it gave the other, proved as fatal, for he did not long survive him; and they both were dead, before she was delivered of that daughter; which she immediately sent from her, nor could ever, hardly, bear the sight of.

Olinda (bursting into tears again at this) cry'd out, Yet, madam, I am certain I have seen my father; his guardian spirit it was preserved me.

She then described the form, and other circumstances (as before-mentioned) in her dream; which threw her mother, for some time, into another agony of grief and horror. But it was just then the priest attended her, and all but him left the apartment

But she called back Almira, and requested earnestly of her, that she would
pre-

presently again come to her, and bring Cleone with her.

Almira found Florello waiting for her impatiently ; and, some time after, he, with Almira and Cleone, went to take a final leave of that unhappy woman ! who then was only able to make signs of penitence, and satisfaction, on the sight of them ; but seemed to struggle hard for speech, while she looked steadfastly, by turns, upon Cleone and Florello. And, notwithstanding all the absolution she had just received, horrors of guilt remained so strongly on her soul, that none of them were able long to bear her room.—Death, in itself, we know, is called the king of terrors ; but how much must those terrors be augmented, when we see him labouring beneath the dreadful load of an unhoping, guilty conscience ! Such was Crudelia's miserable end ! And her unhappy children, who were thus made acquainted with her crimes (which they were born to suffer by) immediately took leave forever of each other.

Olinda threw herself, and her small fortune, into one of the severest convents. And Flavillo (quickly after) bid farewell to all he knew, and went abroad, to settle for his life; where neither he, nor his disgraceful story, would be known.

Almira saw her funeral executed, as Crudelia had requested; which was in the most private manner, and late at night. And she had desired likewise of her, that, after it was over, she would put on no mourning for her death; adding, that she had reason to desire (as soon as possible) to be forgotten (not remembered) by a niece, whom she had treated so unworthily; and wish'd her to be happy shortly with Florello.

And it was not many days before (the time being almost expired of Almira's mourning for her father) he gently ventured to remind her of it. Amanda seconded him in his solicitation upon that subject, and every necessary preparation soon was made on both sides, for the wed-

wedding; and, with Fidelio and his spouse, they in a little time return'd to Hertfordshire, to celebrate their nuptials at his father's, as had been there determined.

But Almira, before she went, visited her poor faithful servant Prudence; who, with her daughter, she had engaged to come and live with her; the mother as her housekeeper, and Sharlot as her woman; promising to make their places easy and happy to them.

Fidelio and Amanda would have vainly prevailed upon Almira and Florello, to have made their house in town, their own, on this occasion; but Bellmore's stronger claim, obliged them to desist. For, in his letters, he declared he should esteem himself ill-known indeed, by his dear daughter (as he would then call her) if she could not so far confide in him, as to venture, while a maid, to sleep in his protection; and besides, added he, my spouse has never seen her lovely child (that is to be) nearer, than in my weak description of her; and she

is grown impatient now; I can assure you, till we have her with us; to acknowledge, how she thinks herself obliged, like me, to one who has restored our dear Florello. — These, and a few more arguments, so far prevailed, that a short time before the day appointed for their nuptials, when Bellmore and his son came to Fidelio's country house (where first Almira went) determined not to go back, they said, without their lovely prize, as they then called her. She agreed to go; but not unless her friend Amanda, with Cleone, would accompany her thither; which she, obligingly complied with.

And indeed no thoughts hung heavier, or indeed so heavy, on Almira's mind, than those occasioned by the character she had heard of her, who was to be her mother-in-law: she did not relish greatly her not seeing of her, when she was there before: nor did she, when she visited as a physician, much admire her. But generally, if not always, the greater considerations can overpower the smaller, and therefore he, or she, who truly

truly loves, I will swallow little difficulties, if they are somewhat bitter ; as they have that pleasant cordial, which only love and friendship can bestow, to wash away its taste from the nice palate of reflection.

But she, however, soon was most agreeably surprized, on that account.

Bellona viewed her (as her good husband led her in from the coach to her, who met them in the hall) with grave, but civil observation ; and saluted her (with more, indeed, of the common English form, and stiffness, than usually exists amongst the most well bred) and welcomed her, with much respect and seeming satisfaction. For it appeared, by something that soon was whispered in the family, till it had reach'd Almirra's ear, that she had at first conceived her to be one of little or no fortune (having then heard nothing of her) by her making the first visit ; but when she was, by Bellmore and her son, let further into that affair, she had repented of her rudeness, in refusing to come down
into

into her company, which was in fact the case.

However, nothing now was left unsaid, or done, by her, that could atone for it ;—she took the tenderest notice of her ; and told Florello she was happy in his choice ; and doubted not at all but he would be so likewise ; and complimented Amanda on her taste, in friendship : who smiling, answered, that she could almost envy her, indeed, a happiness, which, had Amintor's age befriended her, she should have yielded up much more reluctantly.

And, having spent an hour or two agreeably, (all parties seeming pleased) Amanda took her leave of them.

In short, Bellona proved, how fortune's all-attracting charms, possesses with kind ideas the beholders of its favoured object.

Florello told his loved Almira, the day following, that his father had employed his lawyer, and given him an order

der to expediate the marriage articles ; which he had kindly insisted to have left entirely to his own care and management ; adding, that if, when he perused them, there should be any thing inserted that he wished to alter, he would most willingly oblige him in it, or his Almira likewise.

She looked down and blushed ; but, quickly recollecting that her lover's delicacy had never mentioned to her any thing concerning her affairs of fortune, she replied, What you have said just now, sir, reminds me of a neglect in me ; I will step up stairs a minute, and be with you again presently.

Florello, understanding what she meant, hastily catch'd her hand as she was rising ; and, with precipitation, checked by gentleness, forced her to her chair again ; crying, at the same time, (with accents full of love and tenderness), Not for the Indies shall you leave me, upon any such account.—No, madam, I am convinced enough already, how inestimable a treasure I shall soon possess in you alone ! I
neither

neither wish, or seek, for any other: my joy can meet with no addition, from the most splendid consideration of that nature, I assure you; but what must arise from your being mistress of the disposal of it. But, if your kind and tender care, in this thought, regards my father, you shall oblige me by consulting with him only concerning it; tho', believe me, you will find it quite unnecessary; for I know him;—he is not so unworthy of your dear alliance. He would have been, if possible, more happy had your fortune, or rather want of it, left him further room to prove his worthy preference of virtuous, beauteous merit, such as yours; and such as you, and only you, can surely shew him.

And it was not many days before Almira was convinced, Florello had not been mistaken in his father; he having made her settlement above as large again as could have been expected by her fortune, on his own estate; leaving entirely to her, and Florello, the disposal of all hers; which gave the highest satisfaction
to

to a son, who shared hereditarily the father's noble generosity.

And now the happy day appeared! for which, good Bellmore had prepared an equipage, both for himself and son, in all respects quite suitable to the occasion. — Florello's he presented to him the evening before his marriage; making him, at the same time, the immediate master of a fine estate adjoining to his own, which he had lately purchased to the amount of half his fortune; telling him, with a tender, melancholy smile, that, when one lease or two for life, were out, (and the incumbents were not young) the rest would all fall in to him of course.

Bellmore had, likewise, bespoke diamonds, to the value of several thousand pounds, for him to make a present of to his Almira; concerning the taste and fashion of which, he had first consulted him.

And all things being now ready, and the morning opened that was to crown
this

this happy lover's wish! Florello appeared in white, embroidered richly with a gold-and-silver point-dé-spang, bespoke in a new taste entirely, which likewise ornamented a waistcoat of white sattin; and, tho' his dressing did not take up above one quarter of the time most beaux allow themselves daily to waste, upon occasions less important, he might be said, indeed, to look the accomplished bridegroom.

His person was amiable, genteel, and easy; his complexion florid; with the most pleasing manly features; enlivened, agreeably, by sparkling, yet gentle eyes, expressive of those virtues which his soul was master of.

Nor was his bride so long in ornamenting, as to endanger their being at church too late; tho', from the super-numerary trifles of which a lady's dress too much consists, she was much longer than his hastening wishes could well allow of: yet all, besides himself, then present, made her the compliment of wondering,
how

how she could appear, in such a little time, as she had then been up, so finish'd in the perfection of exact attire.

Her dress was a brocade of white and silver; and her head was richly adorned with jewels; among which, as there was the most valuable one, called Modesty, she could not think those ornaments sufficient to exclude all other covering, tho' warranted by fashion; and, therefore, wore a head of Brussels lace dress'd in the English form; remembering that it is, in holy writ, forbid, for women to appear at church bare-headed.

She came down to breakfast with her usual ease, exempt from that too common affectation used by many maidens on the brink of matrimony; for she behaved, as she had always said she hoped she should, on so solemn and interesting an occasion! ever conceiving it, both an affront to their own judgment, as well as to the object of their choice, for a woman to put on airs of half-repenting doubtfulness, as if to combat kinder inclination into a sort of seeming dissatisfaction.

And

And no one would have known by her behaviour, or her look, (altered in no respect, but by a somewhat deeper blush, when he, her happy lord who was to be, approached her) that she was just then going to be married.

She had requested, that no more company might be invited, on the occasion, than their friend Fidelio with his spouse, and son, the young and much admired Amintor, whom they were all, with reason, fond of, and whom Florello had promised to accept as bride-man.

All were dressed in suits quite new, and elegantly chosen; Cleone, who was the bride-maid, was the humblest in appearance, tho' quite in character; her cloaths being only plain white tabby.

The company aforesaid, being come, and Bellmore telling them, they must now think of moving, Florello very readily accepted of the summons; and, taking his Almira's hand, (which in that moment he seemed to press with an exulting, happy ardour!) he led her to
his

his coach; into which, then, Bellmore led Bellona, and Fidelio's having in it room for Cleone, they sat out with joy conspicuous upon every face: but, on hers, who was the mistress of the ceremony, it was seen thro' a serene and modest dignity; which no less denoted a laudable and conscious satisfaction, from having made a prudent choice.

When they stepped from their coach into the church, Almira found that it was necessary for her to exert the utmost spirit of her resolution, which she attributed only to the unexpected crowd there waiting for them. Yet, she had too much reverence and regard, for all she was come there to say, to miss repeating any part of it; tho' it was not every part, indeed, she could be plainly heard to utter. And an involuntary palpitation, during the ceremony, like an audacious pioneer, betrayed its undermining boldness, by disturbing the composure of the tender fabrick of which her handkerchief was made; and not a little conveyed its influence to remove the blush from off her cheeks. However,

she recovered that, soon after the sacred rites were over, and resumed the coach again, with rather more precipitation, than she had left it with, her trembling knees requiring a little of such relief as that afforded them.

They were no sooner seated in it, than the ever-ready ringers forced the bells to pay them their congratulations. Upon which the bridegroom said, politely, Well, my Almira, I can hence aver, that bells, to me, have harmony excelling all the art of softer music; and concerts have been thrown away upon me, for they could never touch my soul so sensibly as those harsh sounds (as they are called) do now. But, it is from you alone, my love, they borrow all their sweetness!

Bellmore, before he stepp'd into the coach, requested the good clergymen, to whom they had been, he said, so agreeably indebted, to let them have his company at dinner. And, when seated, shook hands affectionately with his son and daughter; telling her, she was doubly

now

now his child, he having been her father at the altar.

Bellona too, with the sincerity of pure affection, wished that joy to every party, which she seemed then, very heartily, to be a sharer in ; and, upon their return, it was reciprocally wished again, and witnessed by salutes, thro' all that friendly company.

Florello owned, he thought himself the happiest man alive ; confirming it at the same time, as tho' he took an oath, and made his lady's hand his bible.

But his father, with a chearful air and voice, reply'd, Hold there, my son, thou art not, I am sure, the happiest, since I am no less so from seeing it : but thou, alas, art yet a stranger to paternal joy ! And it will be time enough twenty years hence, if I should live so long, for me to hold a contest with thee on that subject ; thou mayst be then, perhaps, my match, tho' so much younger.

Florello bowed, with conscious sense of what he owed so excellent a father; and told him, that he had not vanity enough, indeed, to think he should, at any age, be that; tho' it was the utmost wish of his ambition, to inherit his perfections.

Well then, returned the bride, to esteem them worthily, is the best step towards imitation.

At which Amanda smiled, and told her, that there spoke the wife already, in that kind insinuation: Bellmont, himself, with all his skill in natural Philosophy, could not have said a better truth than that.

The unexpected name of Bellmont, called up all the blush of conscious recollection, to Almira's face; and, in a moment, her eyes, as if to hide it, sought the floor, sweetly confused! which could not escape the bridegroom's watchful observation. He looked alternately on both, for some small time; then, turning

turning to Amanda, asked her, if that worthy gentleman, his kindest, best physician, had never called again upon her? for he thought, he said, there was a kind of promise that he would not be absent on that happy day: and he seemed one whose word could not be doubted.

Amanda answered, that he was one whose word, in truth, was sacred! and he had not forgot that promise: adding, I find, my friend, you were not long enough acquainted;—one visit was too short an intimacy for you to even know him when you see him, or you could not have missed him at the altar: my eyes were taken up by hardly any other object during the ceremony: and you, who stood still nearer to Bellmont, not to have seen him, is indeed amazing!

If there he only could be seen, (returned Florello) I am not, madam, the least amazed I missed him; for there one object drew my whole attention. (I should indeed, I think, except the minister).

And are you positive, (returned Almira) that this one object was not Bellmont?

Here Florello, starting, caught immediately the pleasing information; and, in a grateful rapture, flew to prove his ardent sense of such an obligation, by the tenderest embrace! crying, And is it possible thou canst be Bellmont? my Almira! Bellmont? Yes, yes, it is, it must be so; for nothing, greatly good and generous, could be too much for thee to execute. How could I be so near the lovely mistress of my wishes, and be a stranger to such happiness! Yet had it been presumptuous in me too, could I have then suspected it. How has this obligation crowned my sense of bliss! I can now recollect (with wonder at my own too stupid insensibility) that sweet resemblance! which I thought I found in that kind visiter. But yet, so barbarously (for I must call it so) hadst thou contrived to cover those sweet features! that no person could have known them. Henceforth, who dares pre-

pretend to say, Almira scorns the aid of art? She stands, you hear, detected now; but neither red or white, I am sure, were called to thy assistance: but their native bloom was some way skillfully conceal'd in the most dextrous manner, that even thy years seemed almost doubled.

To which Almira modestly and dutiously replied, As you can pardon this deceit, I find, I will not only let you into the method I made use of, but will likewise promise, it shall be the worst disguise I will ever use against you.

Bellmore, as well as his Bellona, looked and listened with delighted wonder! and then bless'd so new and kind an instance of the most laudable regard! and begg'd her to proceed.

She then informed them, how, with cork, burnt black, she had enlarged her eye-brows to just double their own size; and, with a little of the same material, mixt with some powder, had touch'd her cheeks and chin, (a worthy secret that

she had treasured up in memory, from wonderful stories told her in her nursery, in order to ape somewhat of the masculine appearance; which not a little was assisted by the bushy shadowing of her wig: and that her voice had very opportunely acquired, just then, an accidental disguise, (that seemed quite natural) from having got a hoarseness in it by a cold, which change of dress had given her: yet, (notwithstanding that had made so great an alteration) once or twice her voice had given her fearful apprehensions of being discovered by him.

Fidelio told her, that he would own it frankly, he had wished most heartily she might be discover'd; partly on his good friend Florello's account; and for her having never suffered him himself, (tho' an old married man) to come, with his Amanda and Amintor, to see her doing honour to his sex. But I, however, (added he) must still congratulate you, sir, on your being thus happily become the possessor of so sweet a delicacy! which is no less distinguished in her having kept

kept this story (till now) a secret, from the only person living who could most worthily applaud it.

Just then a servant came up, and told the bridegroom, that a gentleman desired to speak with him below.

Almira starting, cried, Who is it? You'll never be polite enough, I see, to be denied.

Florello asked, if he was not a clergyman? (remembering his father's invitation of the minister who married them) and, being told he was, ran down immediately, to ask him to walk up stairs; wondering, at the same time, that he should wait below.

Mean while, Almira went into the adjoining room; nor was returned before her spouse and friend came up.

But, we will here acquaint the reader, how Florello was surprized, to find this clergyman (instead of him he had expected) a friend and intimate companion
of

of his when he was abroad; who, since he saw him, had taken up the gown; and, ignorant of his marriage, accidentally had come that day to see him.

Florello, therefore, with great joy, received him; telling him, how doubly welcome his appearance was on that occasion; adding, that if he had known so loved a friend had been in England, he could not have omitted requesting, not only his company, but a still greater favour of him, to have tied his happy knot that morning;—but that he never thought he should have seen him in that habit.

Florello then conducted him up to the apartment where he had left Almira, &c. but, just as he was opening the door, he was called by Bellmore from below, who wanted to say something to his son that moment; he therefore, cried, Dear Sam, walk in;—excuse me;—there you'll find the bride;—I will wait on you immediately.

The

The clergyman walked slowly forward, bowing sedately to the company, and taking, at the same time, a regular survey of all, to find the lady out, whom he was first to compliment. His observation guided him to fix upon Cleone, being the only person present, whose form and dress answered his expectation; he, therefore, most respectfully advancing up to her, saluted her, and then addressed her in the following manner:

You must forgive me, madam, I have just now been authorized, to do myself this honour; then added: I always had the highest way of thinking concerning my dear friend, your worthy spouse; and he has given me now, indeed, a proof. His taste is not inferior to his merit, in having made so excellent a choice, as from appearance, madam, I must persuade myself, he has in you; and, from my soul, I wish you all that joy —

But here Cleone faltering in her speech, stopped his going any further on, by answering him thus:

No,

No, sir, indeed, you are mistaken quite; it is not me, you mean; the bride will presently be here; I have no title to your compliment.

But, madam, returned he, (begging her pardon, and seemingly ashamed of the mistake) that voice entitles you, however, to a place in my remembrance; though I am such a stupid and forgetful fellow, as not to be able to recollect where I have seen you.

When the bride just then appearing, Cleone pointing towards her, said, That lady, sir, perhaps, may help your recollection, to resolve that question.

He looked, some moments, stedfastly upon Almira; and then started backward, while both his hands rose up, as though to keep true time to wonder: gazed, and grew pale; then moved a step towards her, and bowed, but uttered not one word. And thus Florello found him, (who came in that minute) and all the company standing in great astonishment;

ment; looking first on one another, then on them, in wonder what it meant.

The bride seemed likewise much surprized; but, with a smile, she curseyed to him, and then reached out a chair, and begged him to sit down.

The bridegroom caught the spreading wonder too, and cried, My friend, I have been very rude to leave thee so abruptly; but, prithee, what is the matter with thee?

You have, perhaps, replied Samander, more to ask pardon for than that; however, sir, I wanted not this proof of the superiority of your accomplishments: you have mentioned to me not one word, what lady you had married. Know, therefore, that I had once the ambition to look up as high as there myself, tho' less successful, it is plain; and I am proud to prove my friendship by this trial of it, for I can wish you happy, notwithstanding, with her, from my soul, though once my whole felicity depended, I can assure you, only on her smiles.

Flo-

Florello, somewhat gravely smiling, told him, he deserved but half that pity, he should otherwise have spared a friend, on an occasion that he owned the most demanded it; for having, like a miser with his gold, kept to himself his knowledge of so inestimable a treasure, and never, during their familiar intimacy so long abroad, permitting once her name, or praise, to make a part of any of their various conversations. Yet, had I known this secret sooner, added he, I assure my dear Samander, my friendship should have acted kinder by him, than to have let him, thus unprepared, meet with so cruel a surprize as this, to pay the kindness of his visit to me.

Well, my dear, worthy friend, returned Samander, I forgive thee heartily; and I have humility enough, at least, to own, that I but lost a treasure, thou wert ever worthier to find; and from that lady's just discernment, and my deficiency of merit, remember to acknowledge, that thy abundant happiness arose. But thou wilt do me justice in return, I hope,

hope, and let her know one truth concerning me; that time, and the advantage of thy friendly counsel, have quite new-formed Samander, since he had the honour of seeing her; and this I must insist on, as the least amends you ought to make me.

Florello told him, he must beg his pardon there; for it was needless, and he chose to leave the merit of that cause for him alone to prove, adding, that such attempts to praise, did but depreciate often, and that intrinsic worth could stand alone, and needed no such weak supporters.

Upon hearing which, Almira said, she hoped she might congratulate him then, with pleasure, on the habit he had chosen, though she should never have suspected the finding him, of all mankind, beneath it.

He bowed, and looked quite conscious of that truth, but told her, nothing was more common than to see extremes supplant each other; and I have
had

had the ambition, madam, continued he, to grow good, thank heaven! before I reach an age that might invalidate the merit of an attempt so laudable; and certainly my duty.

But, madam, by your leave, and yours, Florello, I see no reason why all these discoveries are to rob me of a right which both the day and courteous liberty of England will allow of. Though, you must know, I first, through a mistake, saluted one who is not a bride yet, I should not, therefore, loose my title to the honour of distinguishing, that way, the lady who is really one.

He then rose, and saluted her; and afterwards turning towards Cleone, said, I may, I think, demand again this favour of you, madam, as that just now, it is plainly proved, was not meant for you; and, to atone for my mistake, I wish you only such a husband, in reality, as I believed you were the mistress of. How are you altered since I saw you, that I could not, at first, perfectly recollect you! But you will, I hope, forgive

give my saying so ; for it is an alteration greatly to your advantage, I am certain. You was much thinner, I can now remember, when I had last the pleasure of seeing you ; nor was the bloom of health so happily apparent, as it now appears.

Cleone looked, if possible, more silly, at this second address he made to her, than she had done before ; and only answered with a bow and blush.

Just then, good Bellmore joined the company ; and, civilly addressing himself to Samander, told him, he was much obliged, that he had favoured them that day ; and he would now much less regret the having heard that another gentleman of his cloth could not oblige them by a visit as was expected ; since his place, at table, would be filled with one so highly welcome to his son : (for Bellmore, when he called Florello just before, had then been made acquainted with his name, and the regard he had for him).

And now they were informed, that dinner waited for them below stairs; where they found every thing that could be wished to form a wedding feast: at which the poor were not forgotten, an open table for them being ordered in the kitchen all that day, and a considerable sum of money distributed besides, throughout the neighbourhood, to such as stood the most in need of it.

The day was spent in chearful mirth and entertaining conversation, void of all those unpardonable impurities of speech which often are permitted to prophane (if I may use that word) a ceremony that is in itself so pure and sacred.

And Bellmore, still retaining both his taste and limbs for dancing, he had prepared a band of music ready for that purpose. There being three married couple, Cleone's partner must of course be the young clergyman. Nor was the well-deserving youth Amintor left unprovided for, as there was present Bel-lona's niece Terresa; who, being within
a year

a year of his own age, and likewise very pretty, seemed to be the only partner he would, in case he had been asked, have chosen. They all agreeably amused themselves that way for several hours, the days being then at the longest. But, when the evening approached, Samander took his leave, tho' press'd by Bellmore and the bridegroom to accept of a bed there that night, if he would for no longer time oblige them with his company; but no persuasions could prevail: he civilly excused himself, and promised shortly after to renew his visit. And it was observable, he did not fail to take due notice of his partner, e'er he left them, (a very common case on such occasions).

Soon after he was gone, all parties (being somewhat weary) sat down to rest themselves a little, and receive refreshment from a glass of wine.

Florello was agreeably employed, in bantering politely his Almira on his discovering that she had formerly refused his friend the doctor; telling her, that

he found it was well for him Samander had not sooner wore that gown; divinity having he knew, full often, an attractive power to draw towards itself a saint!

The room they then were in, look'd out upon the road, and faced the gate that led directly to the house. All were engaged in different little parties of discourse and happy gaiety, except indeed Cleone, who had, for some few minutes, separated herself from all the rest, and then leant sideways against the window, somewhat thoughtful; when Bellona observing it, and seeing a glass of wine, that she had helped her to, untouched, went with it to her, and reminded her that it was the bride's good health she thus neglected drinking to. Upon which, Cleone, smiling, took it; and was just going to drink it, when a loud rap heard at the gate occasioned her holding the glass of wine suspended for a moment, to observe what company was coming at so late an hour; when instantly, from between her trembling fingers, it dropp'd upon the floor; which, drawing every eye at once upon her, they prevented her

her from following it ; as by her ghost-like aspect, and declining head, she shewed them she was going, in a moment more, to do.

All were astonished, and surrounded her ; while Bellmore and Florello, who both stood talking just then next the window (with no less concern than all the rest, at what had so surprizingly and suddenly alarmed them, upon her account) started, and pointed to the garden ; Florello crying out at the same time, Look yonder, sir ! see, is not that Samander, now bringing up the walk, between two men, all bloody, and to appearance dead, or dying ?

They had no sooner answered one another, to confirm this melancholy truth, than they were told it by a frightened servant ; who informed them of the following sad occasion of it : — That his chariot had been overturned but a few paces from their gate ; the coachman having turned too short, either thro' negligence or liquor, by which accident (the glasses

being up, and broke) it was feared that he had received some fatal hurt!

The gentlemen ran down immediately into the room where they had led Samander; while all the ladies were obliged to stay and lend assistance to Cleone, who did not recover for a considerable time; and, when she did, appeared in great confusion when they asked her how she did.

Almira told her, she had tired herself, perhaps, too much by dancing, as she was but little used to it. But she made small reply, only declared, that a sudden sickness, in one moment, seized her, which was now almost gone off.

No one, then present, seemed to be a stranger to the real cause; but, as she did not name what had surprized her, every one avoided mentioning it to her then. But her confederate friend, the bride, prevailed on her to let her lead her to a couch in the next room, in order to compose herself a little; fearing she

she might relapse, should she be present when any news, unwished, about Samander, might be brought up stairs.

However, it appeared, when they had fetched a surgeon, and had his wounds examined, that they were (tho' deep) not dangerous; but, from the violence of the blow, he had received upon his head, and loss of blood, he was made senseless, and was put immediately to bed, and proper means applied for his recovery; which the surgeon gave them great hopes would be more speedy than the unskilful might have imagined, (or a practitioner less conscientious might, indeed, have made it) from his horrible appearance when he first came in, being almost covered with his blood.

Nor was the gentleman mistaken; for his senses very soon returned after a little rest; but it was thought proper not to let him talk too much, or be disturbed, more than might just be necessary for his safety.

As soon as he was sensible enough to find out where he was, and recollect what had befallen him, he begg'd he might see his friend Florello, before they could prevail on him to try to rest again.

Supper was then just over, and the cheerfulness of that (before) quite happy company, was much abated by this melancholy accident; when the account a servant gave them, that he was able to make this request, seemed to enliven every countenance so much, that poor Cleone (who had forced herself to come to table) happily might pass among the crowd unnoticed; tho' her satisfaction was the most conspicuous, and it had made the greatest change in her complexion.

Florello went to him directly, and Samander (tho' faint yet) made his friend a sensible and kind apology, on an occasion indeed that required but little. For it might be easily believed he meant not to himself, or him, a trouble of that
fort.

fort. He begg'd, however, that it might cast no damp upon whatever mirth the family should choose to make; assuring him, that he was so much mended then, that he believed but for the foreness of his head, and an unusual faintness, he could be as able, as he was desirous, to make one amongst them again; adding, that he was an unfortunate officious fool, as it had happened, to blunder on him upon the only day, whereon an accident, like that, must be the most unwelcome.

Florello answered him in the most tender manner; and assured him, that, at any time, his welfare must lay equal claim to his concern and carefullest regard; and begg'd him to forget, if possible, that a contrast so disagreeable had happened on that day; but would not suffer him to talk any more upon that subject, nor any other could he have hindered him. But then, Samander desired him to send away his footman to acquaint his father (in whatever manner he should judge would least surprize him) with the occasion of his not returning

turning home ; adding, I would rather spare the other, (meaning his coachman) as least proper to attend me ; but, as I know my father to be passionately hasty, I should fear for the unlucky fellow, when he discovers that his carelessness has been the cause of this misfortune.

Florello then wished him good rest, and took his leave of him ;—then instantly obeyed him, and dispatched the man ; giving strict orders to his servants that the mirth, wherein they were engaged, might be conducted with the utmost quiet ; making it more worth their while, to lend attention and obedience to him, by liberally rewarding them at the same time ; and telling each, only to whisper out, as often as he would, the bride's good health, and every other that they chose to drink.

The same obliging care was next observed above ; and pleasure wore, for the remainder of that evening, the curb of kind consideration and humanity.

Fidelio,

Fidelio, with his spouse and son, took leave of them just after supper.

And about twelve of the clock the bridegroom was observed to yawn two or three times, (or rather seem to do so; for, by the briskness of his eyes and spirits, that was most certainly counterfeited). He likewise said, I think this fright, upon my friend's account, has left the influence of an ague fit upon me. To that however (Bellmore smiling, answer'd) we will impute it; and, looking kindly on his daughter, told her, that as she saw he was so much disorder'd, she would have too much good-nature, he was certain, to oblige him to sit up too late; adding, that he believ'd it was not early then. Upon which, Florello's watch was foremost to inform his father of the hour, (tho' it was found to go, indeed, near half an hour faster than every other there;) and then Bellona, turning towards the bride, cried, Come my dear, we wives, you see, are taught to understand our summons; your father

ther now, I see, grows sleepy, therefore let us now withdraw.

Almira bowed, and told her (tho' but faintly) she would follow her: but first looked somewhat silly, for a moment, as if to catch some straw-weigh'd slight excuse, if possible; which prudent wisdom hastily informed her, would not hold her long; and then she rose, and curtesying, (less gracefully a little, than she was used to do) wished Bellmore good repose, and waited on her new mamma: while Cleone and Terresa, caught up each of them a candle, to conduct them up to the bridal chamber; nor would Almira be attended there by any more: and those three friends, indeed, seemed proud of their new office, (that of helping to undress her;) which, when they had finished, all but Bellona took their leave of her, and went to their apartments. But she first returned to acquaint her son, that he need not, unless he chose it, sit up any longer; tho' the drowsy disposition (added Bellmore) is gone off.

And

And he did not require being spoke to twice, before he heard and paid obedience to her summons.

Bellmore and she attended him up stairs; and waited in the room adjoining, while he undressed himself. They then went in, just to confer their blessing on that worthy pair! as both those parents had requested they might do.—A liberty less painful than, methinks, to virgin modesty, than one, Almira and Florello could not suffer, but which is frequently allowed of upon such occasions, when a bride and bridegroom are set up in bed, in order to be most ridiculously pelted at, for the diversion of the company, under the pretended right they plead their claim to, that of throwing the stocking;—an entertainment, by much too ludicrous, I think, for any part of matrimonial ceremony; and no less offensive to the true idea of female delicacy.

And

And now, their wedding being over, Florello's stay was but to be a short one with his father;—all things were ready for his reception at the house belonging to the estate Bellmore had given him. But that tender parent seemed desirous of their continuing some time longer with him; looking upon it as a separation somewhat disagreeable; tho' a few minutes could, at any time, convey them to each other's house.

Samander mended very fast; and, tho' confined by order of his surgeon to his room, declared, he would not loose the pleasure of his friends society, when able to sit up, to compensate the pain he had suffered. Florello therefore, and his spouse, drank tea in his apartment: and, in a day or two, he seemed to express surprize a little, at not hearing from his father. But his friend told him, that he need not be the least concerned about it, for he, upon mature consideration, had determined, that the most kind apology was to acquaint him only, that
he

he had staid to honour a friend's nuptials. And I have charged your servant, added he, to mention nothing further. He is returned this day.

Florello had a double reason for so doing, as the bride had begg'd him to prevent, if possible, his father's coming there, as his son's life was not the least in danger; remembering, that his disposition and behaviour formerly were not the most agreeable: and therefore judging, that, upon such a visit (all things considered) his company might be disgustful to all parties. For her refusal of his son, it seems, had greatly hurt his pride, of which he had more than a common share, tho' of a vulgar sort.

Nor did Samander seem displeased with the kind turn Florello gave the message.

Cleone could not be perswaded to make one among the sick man's visiters; tho' it was certain she feared herself,
much

much more than she did him, in her refusing so to do. He soon perceived it, and asked, one day, why he was never favoured with his partner's company? as all, but her, had condescended to oblige him by repeated visits;—he hoped she was not indisposed; and, if she was not, he should think it a reflection on his cloth, in case a maiden lady should have any scruples on approaching (at least in company) his bedchamber.

All, who were then present, were much pleased to find his spirits so cheerfully disposed. Upon which Almira started up, telling him, that he should likewise remember, that a maiden lady always ought to stay till she was asked; and therefore, why not, pray, till asked for? (continued she) but that, however, she would let her know he had made her now, in form, an invitation.

But Cleone was some time before she would accompany her in: till her friend (laughing at her) said, This surely, cannot be Cleone! for I never thought
it

it possible for her to grow a prude ! She then protested she would discover to Samander all she knew ; and that (she said) was more, she dared believe, than she herself would care to tell him, or to have him told, at least, at present ; adding, My dear, indeed, you did not cut your forehead with the wine-glass ; tho' you might, I will allow, have done so ; therefore no mark is likely to betray you, if you can but keep your own sweet council.

The other then blushing, a little conscious of being so well known, attended her to drink their tea in his apartment. But, for the world, she could not ask him how he did, that he might have less trouble to discover, how well her heart sincerely wished him.

Samander most agreeably acknowledged the favour of her visit ; and told her, he was going unfaresly to betray a secret, that concerned her chiefly, before all that company : yet, as all there, he said, were friends, he hoped she would

forgive it. Then, turning to Florello, he proceeded in the following manner :

You would not, I am sure, believe, to look upon that lady, sir, who, till this minute, has declined, in company and open day-light, to be seen thus visiting a batchelor, that she would come by night abruptly, to break in upon, and even disturb his slumbers.

They all laughed very heartily, at the expence of poor Cleone, from observing the variety of battling passions which this occasioned on her features : but as, at last, a little anger threatened to be gathering itself into a half-formed frown, in order to prepare and then produce an answer, he proceeded soon to the solution of his unintelligible speech.

Yet she has, I assure you ;—but it was in idea only, you will imagine ; tho' I, notwithstanding, feel methinks the influence of it, as strongly thro' my recollection, as I could have done from the reality.

All,

All, as if with one breath, desired to hear what was his dream, (for such they found it was) excepting her it most concerned, and she looked down, turned pale, half trembled, then looked up again in order to conceal confusion, like one, who, conscious of some theft or murder, feared it was on the brink of being discovered.

He saw the pretty perturbation he had put her spirits into, and kindly (not to stare her still more out of countenance) smiled, and seemed not displeased; and then looked down himself obligingly, to keep her company. But presently continued thus his subject, observing silent expectation, upon every face, sat waiting for him:

The very night I met with this misfortune, in the first slumber I had sense to recollect with clearness any thing, my cruel fancy truly, thinking I had not had enough in my first fall, chose to oblige me with a second! which, I declare, has

left a deeper impression on my memory than the first ; tho' not upon my face so deep a one ; and, in the moment I was falling, I had enough politeness, I assure you, tho' asleep, to reach out hastily my hand to save that lady, who then filled the vacant seat beside me in the chariot ; and, by receiving her upon that arm, I broke her fall entirely, and waked quite sensible of all the sharp effects of mine.

While Samander was speaking this, expressive looks went round ; Florello bit his lips ; Almira seemed to blow her nose, in order to conceal an ungovernable simper ; and Bellmore and Bellona laughed and looked on one another. No one among them had any answer ready, even to thank him for the relation of his dream ; looking all upon Cleone, as if they thought the service done her in it, being particular, demanded only her acknowledgments.

Samander likewise, look'd as if desirous of her making some reply concerning it ; when, after some moments pause, she

she told him, that she must own so kind an instance of his sleeping care, deserved her waking thanks; and had made due amends for the amazement he had caused her in the strange beginning of his story. Which he answered, by assuring her, that his ideal person had done no more, than he could answer for the real one's having performed upon the like occasion.

Many respectful hints, like this, he missed no opportunity of giving her; that it was easy to perceive a budding inclination. But he, recollecting, probably, upon what foundation he had proved unsuccessful in his former passion, for her friend Almira, he feared (their virtuous principles being so much the same) he might be so again repulsed, in making his addresses. And therefore, shortly after, he took occasion when she was present, with his friend Florello and his spouse, to introduce the following topic of discourse:

How happy am I now, cried he, my friend, (addressing himself to Florello) compared with what I ever must remember I once was! which I could wish might be forgot by all except myself. You, madam, (turning towards Almira) shamed and mortified me into a disposition to look inward on those faults, for which I met deservedly my punishment in losing your regard. How careful ought young men to be in choosing their acquaintance! 'Tis of as dangerous a consequence, if not more so, than being negligent in matrimony. A few light fools of fashion, whose folly my slight wisdom was not strong enough to cope with, or confute, bore down my judgment on the rapid stream of their extravagant and passion-led imaginations, on a subject more demanding just regard, and sacred veneration, than all other! and hazarded my being irrecoverably plunged in an abyss of infidelity! tho' I was in religion, I believe, a little like some naves in love-affairs, I talked more lightly than I dared believe. But

con-

conscience, aided by reflection, thro' the compassion of a gracious Providence ! soon convinced me of my error. And the blessed force of that pure doctrine, which I had heard (too patiently) despised, ere long converted me from thence, to think all such despisers of it the most despicable and unhappy part of human beings ! Nor could I then be happy, till I became one of its humblest preachers ; which my father, not the most pleased with, I assure you, called an unnecessary whim of mine, and a mere bastard of despair and penitence ! But soon, however, he provided for me, notwithstanding, a substantial benefice ; insisting tho' upon my putting in a curate there, to do the duty for me, till he (he said) was dead, or I should marry ; it being above a hundred miles from his estate,

—I was but just returned from making a visitation there, to take possession of a place which I should be more pleased could I reside in, when I made this too troublesome excursion to you,

my friend; whose beneficial intimacy, can never be by me forgotten. For, as a virtuous woman's prize is laid to be above rubies! I will declare, a virtuous man's to be of an inestimable value! And I can never sufficiently acknowledge the obligation I am under to your virtue's powerful example.

They all seemed greatly pleased with this discourse; Florello only bowed and smiled; but more apparent satisfaction brightened thro' Cleone's eyes, who looked upon her female neighbour often, (when unobserved by him) as tho' she said, or meant to say, You see, I knew him best;—you thought me partial, I remember;—pray, am I mistaken in him now? and many such dumb sort of speaking, soft insinuations, which Almira needed not to have further explain'd to her.

They both, however, left the room a little after this discourse was finished, and rallied one another very merrily concerning him.

Almira

Almira suitably enough reminded her to stand upon her guard; as she had once instructed her to do, in talking of Florello; saying, in her own words, "I only would advise Cleone to guard her heart, with all its native noble strength, to stand the repeated force of this young clergyman's accomplishments, &c."

Nor was Samander, at that time, less gratefully employed. He had seized the opportunity their absence furnished for him; and told Florello, that as he always knew his disposition to be generous, he had found him now a new occasion of laying him under an obligation to his experienced friendship.

I cannot say, continued he, that you have deprived me of one wife, (tho' you possess the lady whom I, indeed, first hoped to make so) but you have influence, I am certain, sufficiently to prepossess in favour of me, one, whom I should now be happy, I persuade myself, could I call such. Cleone seems

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to have imbibed her charming friend's internal virtues; nor can a form, so every way agreeable, fail to attract the tender passion of a man who has a heart at liberty.

Yet am I, alas! in love,—a poor unhappy fellow; for I have always some ill-fated difficulty to engage; and should I be so fortunate to find her inclinations free (that I might hope, in time, to make myself the happy master of them) I am not certain when, or whether, I must dare to only hope, that I shall make her mine. For I have a will to soften, more inflexible than any lady's whom I would choose to make my application to.

My father has, from various observations of the disagreements but too frequently perceived in the marriage state, conceived of late a very great dislike to my adventuring into it at all: but I have reason to believe, that powerful persuasive gold! and nothing else, would bias him to change his mind. And I have both a natural and religious

ous way of thinking, with regard to having his consent, that influences me beyond some other mercenary thoughts, which likewise join to make it still more prudent that I should wish to have it; I, therefore, ought not, I am afraid, to unbosom yet to her, what friendship fears not to disclose to you, till I have mentioned it to him; for I am resolved to try him.

And, in the mean time, be it your task, I charge you, dear Florello, to expatiate largely on my merit, to prepare my way; and I will promise thee to use my best endeavours, not to reflect disgrace upon thy judgment, (added he) as far as I am able.

Florello told him, he would advise him, as a friend, to loose no time himself; for, to his certain knowledge, her inclination was partly engaged already; and it was impossible to answer for its not being fixed ere long. But that one circumstance was very lucky on his side; for, if he did not stay too long in par-
lying

lying with his father, the only gentleman he thought he need to fear, would not return before him, to supplant him in his hopes, that he assured Samander he was certain of. But, as to the unhappy obstacle of fortune, or rather want of it, he feared that would not be so easily removed; Cleone's being, indeed, below her merit, and his father's expectation for him.—No more (at least that he knew of, than the five hundred pounds which his Almira purposed to present her with upon her day of marriage, and the like sum that he intended to request her to accept from him, as an instance of his just esteem for one so worthily beloved by his dear spouse, and who no less regarded her likewise in the most grateful manner.

Samander only smiled his approbation of their generosity; called fortune dirty dross! and then again seemed thoughtful, as he had been before. For this news, about a lover, shagreen'd him not a little; insomuch, that, to revive him, his friend was forced to give him all the hope,

hope, thro' pity, that he dared afford him, without injuring the absent lady, for whom he had so friendly a regard.

In fine, Florello told him to remember boldly the well-known saying, that "faint heart never won fair lady;" and he would advise him, therefore, to prepare his way himself, before he left her; which, Samander told him, was to be the following afternoon,—he being now well enough recovered to leave off the bandage of his head, and only wore a large black plaister.

He thanked Florello for his information and advice; tho' some part of it, he said, had made him many degrees less happy, than he had felt himself before. But that, however, he would that night accompany him down to supper, since his figure was not quite so scaring now, he thought, as it had been: and his motive for so doing was not difficult to see thro'.

He

He knew that, probably, no opportunity could offer, in his apartment, for speaking to Cleone privately; and, fortunately to his wish, no doubt, he found her in the dining-room alone; for Florello, after he had accompanied her in, withdrew himself immediately, pretending that he went to seek his spouse; but, the truth was, he meant rather to prevent her unwish'd visit, for some time at least.

Cleone, who kept nothing from Almira, told her, how foolish she believed she must have looked when Samander accosted her in words to this effect:

That he, to-morrow, was to take his leave of her; but wished he might set out with her commission to return ere long; since it was too hard a fate, he thought, in a good christian's house, to enter with a broken head, and exit with a wounded heart! The first, he said, she saw was almost healed; but he must learn from only her, if there was any

any cure to be expected for the other.

She, in a little time, summoned up courage to reply, and told him, that if he would wait till she had studied surgery, she should be better qualified to answer him.

He, taking this not for a negative, presumed to take her hand, and kissed it, with more freedom than some timorous laymen would perhaps have done; (but orthodox belief ought to give happy courage) and told her then, he must insist upon a kinder pass, or he would stay (as long as she should make it necessary) where he was, to wait for one: adding, after a little pause, but to be serious, dearest madam! have you no unsurmountable objection, to the thinking favourably of a man, whose cloth, as well as conscience, forbid him to convince you of his regard, by threatening to challenge any one on your account; but who admires and loves you, with a more reasonable and lasting flame, than those per-

haps, might do, who have no other way of proving it? May I, at least, encourage hope, that time may soften, what I would fain think is not disliking now, into partiality, or generous and grateful approbation of me?

Cleone answered him, that she had one, if there had been no other, that must be thought by her an unfurmoun-table objection. That tho', according to the world's opinion, she acknowledged what he had said, appeared to do her honour, (considering that fortune's favours were wholly on his side) yet such a fall as that, in every respect must be, from her he formerly admired so justly, might fix such everlasting self-reproach on his reflection, as would endanger promised happiness.

O, no, replied Samander, not in the least. Deservedly, you know, I lost her years ago; and, since Florello is the happy man, I cannot envy him, even Almira!—

May

May that be all, my sweet Cleone has to say against me ! No, banish such a thought ; for you were meant, by virtue's best alliance, I am sure, to be her sister ; each possessing naturally each other's excellencies !

If, happily, no greater obstacle shall hence arise against my wishes, I will not long, believe me, yield to that.

He then, in order to convince her of the truth of what he said, requested leave, and did not stay to have it, to take one kiss ! which he had just retreated from obtaining, when all the absent part of their assembly joined them, as supper was just ready.

And, on the following day, Samander left them, (returning his most sensible acknowledgments for the kind care that had been taken of him) Florello having first enjoined him in a promise, to let him soon hear from him ; and it was not long before he shewed him, he had not been unmindful of it.

One afternoon, Florello and Almira had been more freely talking with Cleone, upon the happiness which they both hoped attended her, in being, one day or other, Samander's spouse ; when, in that very hour, a letter came from him.

Florello, till he had made himself acquainted with the contents, would have concealed it wholly ; but Cleone's penetrating eye immediately informed him that she was not a stranger to that hand, in order to make sure, perhaps, her hearing what was in it.

He arose, and walking to the window, read it to himself. It was as follows :

“ My dearest friend,

SINCE I saw you I have received another blow, indeed ! tho' one, that I was not without great apprehension of, you know, before I left you.

“ I was,

"I was, I find, no stranger to my father ; and, I was (duty pardon me) just going to say, I wish I had.—But, to my melancholy business.

"I informed him of every particular, and made him my request, concerning sweet Cleone ! Nor could I too much enlarge the truth of my esteem for her. And this, or such as this, was his reply to me :

"So ! so ! I find you have made a prosperous journey of it, truly ! to your much talked of, and great favourite Florello ! And a fine compliment you make yourself and family, in my opinion, don't you think you do ? to reward his marrying your former doating-piece, that haughty madam ! who would not have you truly ; by humbly wedding now, at last, her waiting-gentlewoman, or companion, what is she ? One of no family, I ever heard of ; or fortune neither, I suppose.

H 2

— "No,

—“No, no; I would rather give thee my consent to wed my dairy-maid; a better housewife she might make thee; and save thy substance, tho’ she can’t increase it, more than the other.

—“This is, no doubt, to set your flock (yonder) a pattern of humility! This gown of thine, I think, has made thee good for nothing, Sam: it has left nothing of thy family about thee. Thou wouldst as soon have hanged thyself, some years ago, as have looked down so low as this.

—“No; my consent! I will not have thy foolishness to answer for, by giving it, indeed; — to have thee pay me for it by and by, perhaps, with curses in my grave; when, being tired of the bitter pill, you wish it had been gilded.

“And these, my friend, and many more as harsh expressions, he made use of, to convince me only, that such drossy gilding,

gilding, as he meant, was to weigh down my happiness; which melancholy truth occasioned higher words between us, than, upon recollection, I could have wished; for I intend, to-morrow, to set out for that lately-deserted place, where duty should before have fixed me, had not an opposing duty drawn me from it.

"What time may do, I know not; I have, at present, very little hope, and still less spirits.

"But, this I know, were not my principles of natural obedience, as strong as his unkind inflexibility, I might be easier than I am at present, or am likely soon to be.

"However, be assured, my dear Florello, that you must have another visit from me before I leave this county, (I therefore will postpone my journey) tho' a shorter and a less happier one, I am afraid, than I had bid my wishes

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hope

hope for when I left you; who am, and must remain,

Your truly affectionate friend,

SAMANDER.

P.S. I need not caution you to let this letter be a secret."

Florello now, was under no small embarrassment; Cleone's eyes were fix'd upon him very attentively while he was reading, as tho' she meant to catch intelligence, in its reflective influence, upon his features: and they were so obedient to her observation, as to be quite expressive.

Almira, tho' a party less concerned than the other, took notice how his colour went and came; but, when he had finished it, and put it into his pocket, taking no notice whom it came from; and, to avoid the expected question, left the

the room seemingly somewhat disorder'd, all the fears of love-possessed imagination, rose immediately, and took possession of Cleone's features.

I thought, cried she, (in a low broken-sounding kind of voice) that was Samander's hand; but hands may be alike indeed.—I find I was mistaken.

So are, very often, hearts alike, my dear, (returned Almira) I am not mistaken there. Nor does thy speaking, honest countenance, now dare to tell me, that thou art in any doubt concerning whose hand it was; tho' thou art pleading ignorance so prettily, either thro' fear, or anger! say, which is it, my Cleone? Has his coachman broke his head again, by overturning him? Or has he left thee out of his epistle, having thee nearer in his heart? Come, prithee, my reserved one, look less serious;—had he been dead he had not wrote at all, that be assured of.

Florello then returned; and, having heard the latter part of this discourse, laughed heartily; and told them, Sammander was not dead indeed; but, if they doubted, he would, ere long, appear to them to prove it: adding, this letter, like a running footman, only comes before, that dinner might be ready for him. Tho' I will own, there is likewise some private business in it, that with-holds it from a lady's eye; or I had shewn it you, I am sure, Cleone. We are both, you know, free-masons; and have many sacred sort of secrets: and, if such are not in this letter, I will discover one, at least, to make amends for my not shewing what is really in it.

No correspondence of a worthy brother-mason, can ever tend to prejudice a lady! Of this truth, rest satisfied, Cleone. I mention this particular only, for fear you should be jealous, or suspicious, as I named a secret.

How-

However, think it otherwise, to try
your heart. Prudence may, often, that
way, not only prove our fortitude, but
give a higher relish to felicity.

She saw too plainly, by him, that
there was some unwelcome news; but
yet assumed a smile, her soul seemed to
oppose; till friendly female pride assist-
ed her; and then she answered thus:

I have, indeed, no right, or title, to
enquire, sir, whatever business it contains.
And then seemed thoughtful.

Florello soon found, or else chose to
make, occasion to drop a subject, that
he was fearful now of touching more
upon than he had been obliged to do.

But, it was not long before this secret
was, in part, unravelled: for, in a day
or two, Samander made them a visit;
and it was Cleone's fate, just then, to
be at work below alone, when he came
in, (for Bellmore and Bellona, being
gone

gone out that day, Florello and Almira were employed above, in reading and perusing papers; some affairs, regarding her effects, requiring immediately such an inspection: nor had she before open'd the casket that was given her by her dying aunt.)

He made her, on his first approach, the following compliment: (his face, as some time after Cleone told Almira, quite corresponding with his words.)

Believe me, dearest madam, when I tell you, what I wish it were possible for you to know, as well as I do, that I was not mistaken when I thought I loved you! This little absence has convinced me of it. And yet, believe me likewise, that I left you with much more joy than I now meet you with; for I am soon, alas! to leave you! and for a time uncertain; my hopes too of happiness, all with you. An unwished incident has made it necessary. Yet, you must answer me one or two questions; or else, in leaving you, I shall be truly wretched!

(17181)

First,

First, may I hope, to often hear from your dear hand, (in answer to my frequent and most ardent enquiry after your much prayed for health) that you are well and happy? happier, and more deserving of it, than I shortly must expect to be.

And next, may I have room to hope, that time may prove my friend in absence, not my dreaded enemy; both with respect to your esteem, and a more soft regard than that cool epithet can comprehend?

Cleone scarce knew what to answer, to a speech she could not clearly understand. But, weighing what she had observed before, upon Florello's receiving of Samander's letter, with this; and well remembering what she had heard of Brutus, Samander's father, she replied as follows:

Believe me, sir, I am no stranger to that part of your discourse (or meaning rather)

rather) which you have studiously endeavoured to conceal in such polite expression.

My knowledge of the world, and of myself, could not avoid discovering those truths to me, which I must hold myself obliged for your proposing to hide from me, as you knew that women's pride is easily offended.

But, you'll allow me now, I hope, to have an unsurmountable objection to your suit? that gives more strength to the other, which I made some time ago.—No; I esteem a generous mind, too sensibly and justly, to entertain a thought of ever wounding it.—A parent's having opposed it, could never fail to be, with pain, remembered by us both.

Alas, Florello! (cried Samander) hast thou then been false to my request? He has, I see; I hear he has! It was not kind in him.

Forgive

Forgive me, madam ! forgive my father's ——— It is he, my dear, my most belov'd Cleone ! and yet, what am I saying ? or, what can I say ? I know not how to answer you ! I dare not look upon you ; for this unexpected stroke, indeed, has quite unmann'd my heart ! but it is still, and shall remain devotedly for ever yours !

And, in that moment, he confirmed the truth of what he had said, (according to his meaning in the word unmann'd) by having a recourse to tears ; which called for his handkerchief's assistance ; and, finding he could no longer conceal his grief, he threw himself into a chair, in the remotest corner of the room, confounded and ashamed.

While poor Cleone, from observing him, and being equally herself affected, sat almost like a statue.

When, in that minute, Florello, with Almira, entered the apartment ; the latter running

running to her, with a face of smiling joy, and arms extended to embrace her, crying out, in rapturous accents, My dear, dear, sister! come to my arms! for heaven has now, indeed, been kind to us in all our wishes! She then embraced her in the warmest manner; while Cleone, now bewildered with a certain grief, and an uncertain joy, remained quite silent and astonished! Almira almost smother'd her with kisses for some time: and, her particular attachment to her, had prevented her, at first, seeing Samander.

But, Florello, on his entering the room, perceived him; and, with an equal extasy saluted him, as the other did Cleone; shaking his hands as heartily, as tho', indeed, he meant to rob him of them, and called him brother! saying, My dearest friend, thou art come, in the most happy hour, to crown and share, I hope, our happiness!

Samander looked surprized! and, after a check'd sigh, desired to know, what joy of theirs it was, that he could possibly

possibly be more a sharer in, than by the pleasure, he well knew, their bliss must ever give him as a friend.

Florello told him, he would leave that doubt to be resolved by her on whom it wholly now depended, he believed, (pointing to Cleone) to whom he then gave a small packet he had in his hand; telling her, she was the person into whose care it must be first intrusted; but he should insist upon her promise that his friend Samander might be informed of the contents, when she had read them; for he must be a party now concerned, or she would greatly damp their happiness.

She took it trembling with amazement, and perused it instantly; but seemed much moved at what she read; changed colour frequently, and wept; then, having finished it, replied, in a low melancholy voice, 'Tho' there is one unhappy circumstance I must regret thro' life, in this surprizing piece of news, which is contained in this dear paper, it

is

is so ballanced here, (taking Almira's hand) in making me thus blifsfully allied where I most wished I had been, that I am almost reconciled already to my fate in knowing of it.

There, take it, fir, she cried, (carrying it to Samander) and tell me, if you should be happy in my place, from seeing those contents ? But then a shower of silent tears convinced them, she was not indeed compleatly so. They were as follows :

“ My dear Cleone,

SHAME and remorse, joined with some prudent interested motives, have, thro' life, deprived me of the pleasure I should otherwise have had in owning thee as my dear daughter ! tho' I have had the sight and comfort of thee notwithstanding ; and can reflect, with satisfaction, that I have done a parent's part by thee ; and will do it more so at my death, (as when you read this you will

will own) tho' too much to my unfortunate disgrace! (much more than thine, for thou wert born in, and of, wedlock) for justice is a duty, above all other poor considerations, indispensable.

"Know then, my dear-loved child, that thou art, in truth, to call Almira sister, me, alas! (in only memory) thy father; tho' two different, but equally-deserving women, were your mothers.

"Yours, before heaven! I was contracted to, in the most solemn, secret manner, while a minor. But, as it was a marriage that would not stand good in law, if we had dared to prove it, which our apprehension of some relations cruel rigour and resentment (whom her just sense of duty, no less loved than feared) deterred us from attempting till it was too late, I ever have concealed it. For the two only witnesses we had, who were both friends of mine, (and one of them a student of a college, but not then in holy orders, who married us) soon after died.

“ Thus, youthful ardour, and her parents capricious disapprobation of our at first-agreed-to nuptials, (they having found a wealthier husband for her) in one unhappy hour, so far betrayed my reason and discretion, that I took possession of those charms (too soon) which I now looked on as made sufficiently my own.

“ Yet, tho’ her more than merited regard for me, had so far aided my unweighed desires, when once reflection came to shew her to herself in the new gloomy light this had occasioned, neither her then consenting, tho’ angry and indeed rigourously unkind parents, nor my most warm intreaties, could prevail with her to marry me more legally.

“ And, when I urged her on that subject, she would ever after answer me to this effect :

“ No, no, my dear Bellario ! they were pleased to say, I was too good for you,

you, some time ago, you well remember ; then, what inference must be drawn from their consenting now ? such as my soul can never stoop to suffer ! Truth tells me, (tho' alas ! the sad reverse of what their stern partiality had said) I was never good enough ; but am much less worthy now, by this great breach of duty !—

“ Nor shall I long, I find, out-live the shock of its discovery ! and you, alas ! would neither find, or need I hope, a friend in those I leave.—

“ But I, perhaps, had been too happy here, had it been otherwise ; and we may meet again, where all our joys are perfect.—

“ I can die satisfied, so far, in knowing I am your wife ; tho' a less happy one than I had been, would others have thought like you.—

“ Your only fault, excess of love
(assisted by the weakness and severity of
I 2 kindred)

kindred) has occasioned ! yet my mind, alas ! will never be itself again ; so deeply has their harsh, tho' just, resentment, wounded me.

“ Nor did she ever overcome the melancholy that had seized her, and which, it was thought, alone, brought on her death ; for, in a short time after thou wert born, she died ; in a remote retreat, to which I had some months before (when she was found far gone with child) conducted her, when her parents ordered her to quit their house and sight.

“ Nor did we, ever after, see those unforgiving friends ; who, tho' they had, at last, agreed that I might marry her, declared in the most bitter terms, at the same time, that neither me, nor mine, should ever have of them one shilling : and they left all their fortune to her younger sister, who is still living.

“ I leave

“ I leave thee this particular and sad detail, (which many fathers would, I know, have chosen to have ever hid from thee) because I see, with pleasure, that thou art of a disposition capable of turning it henceforward to thy own advantage, in a world where thou wilt find less honourable stories frequently ; that it may double-arm thy natural good sense and virtue, against all attacks which can imprudently be made against them.

“ But thou art happier than thy mother, my dear Parthenia, was.

“ A truly tender parent, is the greatest blessing ! but thou, in being left without one, may’st, thro’ thy own discretion, prove more happy than those are, often, who must be guided by a bad, or rigid one.

“ But let me give thee, my Cleone, one instruction, as a necessary caution : Let not the love of any man, thro’ courtship, seduce thee into making any

too sacred protestations ! yet, should thou ever be so indiscreetly influenced, let neither titles, wealth, or any powerful persuasion whatever, bias thee to break such solemn obligation !

“ I was so justly true to that ill-fated one ! thro’ which alone it was, thy mother yielded to my importunities of passion and impatience, that had she lived unmarried, I would never have wedded any other woman. — Of which truth I gave sufficient proof, while I addressed her, regardless of every interested view.

“ For then it was, that first Almira’s worthy mother was proposed to me, whom I then refused ; tho’ the advantage of a handsome fortune, joined to each amiable attraction of mind and person, were greatly on her side. —

“ However, Altimira had so partial a regard for me, that she could easily forgive it : and I convinced her afterwards, by many years we spent in mutual

tual love, that no dislike of her occasioned such refusal.

“—Her fortune is, of course, thy sister’s; (and thy mother’s she was deprived of, nor could it ever have been demanded for thee, had I let thy birth be known to any of her family, which I would not).

“But, as you both are equally my dear-loved children, I have, between you, justly divided my acquired estate; and to the half of that aforesaid fortune, these bonds, herein inclosed, amounting to ten thousand pounds, entitle you.

“Live still in the same happy love and harmony together, (till you marry) as you have ever done, since first you saw each other. For my perceiving that, has greatly mitigated my oft-felt affliction when I looked upon thee! as thy every look and feature brought Parthenia to my mind again, with sad remorse.

“This knowledge of your alliance, will, I am sure, increase your love for one another, when I shall have on earth no sense of joy from seeing fit, who am thy tenderly

Affectionate father,

BELLARIO.

P. S. Wear the inclosed ring for thy unhappy, but dear mother's sake:—beneath the cypher is her hair.”

Samander, having read this letter, threw it down, unknowing what he did, for, seeing Cleone silently sit weeping, he ran to her, and hugged her rather than saluted her, crying, Be happy! Would I not be happy, didst thou say, from these contents? Yes, surely! What forbids it? If thou art not cruel to thyself and me, and all!—all shall be happy now, nor wait a tedious age to be so neither, if thou art not unkind, I say, and

not,

not, indeed, the same Cleone. Some tears, I own, were due; and thou hast paid them.

He then embraced his friends, Florello and Almira, in the same sort of rapturous manner! wishing them joy of their sweet sister! Nor knew he, that he trampled over all the scattered papers; till Florello (stooping to take them up, told him, he was a pretty lover truly, to trample thus under his feet his mistress's felicity! according to the worldly estimation made of happiness.

But he, regardless of replying properly to that, cried out, Where has this letter laid till now? Or have you all combined to hide it only from me, till this wondrous hour?—

Bellario has been dead, you told me, above a year; and is it probable that none of you have seen it till this day?

To which Almira answered, that it was both probable and true; (giving him

him briefly an account, which was before inserted here, relating to Crudelia ; adding then, to Cleone, Now you see, my dear, I was not so mistaken, as you thought me, in fancying that my father gave her something for you, more worthy of your acceptance than that ring she gave you ; when she found I had accidentally discovered (by being in the room adjoining) that he had intrusted something to her care for you.—Unhappy woman ! but, however, yet still happy sister ! How has some guardian angel, thro' kind Providence, befriended you as well as me, indeed, and brought us safely thro' the hands of one, whose heart seemed too prolifick of injustice!—

Alas ! how little did our worthy father know her, tho' his sister ; or he had less intrusted her, I am certain,

I dread to think, what must have been her motive for concealing this so long ; and she might still have done so undiscovered, as there was nothing in his will concerning you, or these blest papers.

Yet

Yet all, we find, is safe, thank heaven!
and she, at last, did justice: nor has
taken any more than was her due, (four
hundred pounds, left to be equally di-
vided between herself and son).

But now Samander cried, Pray let me
chide a breach of trust in thee, Florello,
that I could never have suspected. How
couldst thou (really calling me thy
friend) betray that letter of my father's,
to the last eyes on earth I would have
had it shewn to?

Florelo started at this speech, and
seemed to think his joy had overturned
his brain. He asked him what he meant?
applying to both those ladies to assert
his innocence; adding, No, I assure you,
my Samander, I even refused the sight
of it to my Almira; tho', both Cleone
and she, by the superscription, soon
found out it came from you; they
knowing well your hand, before I knew
it, sir; —take that, for injuring my
friendship thus! I thought thou hadst
known me better.

Come,

Come, cried Cleone, truth shall quickly reconcile you both; nor need I pass, methinks, for any conjurefs.

Know then, I am no ft ranger to that letter, (as I juft now informed you, fir) and yet, indeed, have never heard or feen one word of its contents.

Thanks to my kindeft fortune, for that welcome found! (returned Samander)—Forgive my hafty cenfure, good Florello! It was, in truth, that lady's fault, (meaning Cleone) I never knew before that her too charming eyes (tho' I allow their power is great) poffeffed fuch fecond-fightednefs, as I remember to have heard much fpoken of in Scotland.

Well, fir, replied Florello, tho' you are not a Roman-Catholick, fome penance I think requifite for this offence; and, to inflict an eafy one, I now advife you to purfue, immediately, this hafty pretty fcheme of yours, this journey, which

which you believed you was just going to take, either to prove your patience, or exercise your horses, I suppose, which was it?

That journey, sir, returned Samander, shall be left to her decision, who unknowingly obliged me to determine on it.—

Yes, she indeed (tho' innocently) was the only cause, you know; and now, on her account and mine, I think, I ought to hold my resolution; as I have harshly been deprived of proving the sincerity of my disinterested estimation of her virtues!

—And then an inadvertent tear and blush of conscious recollective shame, checked him from saying more.

Well, sir, replied Cleone, then it now is mine to shew a father, (who is less deserving of Samander than I could wish he was, for you'll excuse me, as I know him) that if Cleone ever had a favourable

favourable thought of that Samander, his fortune was excluded from it. Mine, if much worthier, I should think it was still too small for merit. Nor am I ignorant of those generous sentiments, for which, no doubt, you have suffered.—

Brutus, I am sure, (continued Cleone) was at the bottom of your unexpected expedition: however, be that as it will, if he shall still advise it, I have no claim so strong as duty, I assure him, to oppose it.

Samander quickly forced her to decline this subject, for one more pleasing to him; and then (we may believe) returned with happier expectations to his father: who, seeing Bellario's letter, which he had got her leave (tho' much against her will) to shew him, knowing that it would be absolutely necessary, he soon changed his note to one more whimsical, but full as natural.

Samander had promised Florello to remember and inform him, (as he desired him) when next he saw him, of
all

all that past between them; which was to this effect from Brutus:

“Why, ah! egad, I like this girl! Can this be really she, you spoke of, Sam, the other day? I would not have my boy imposed upon, methinks, for half her fortune; yet, this I know to be Bellario’s hand, indeed; and wrote much in his way of thinking, truly. Tho’ e’faith, I like him better now than I ever did in his life-time. He always seemed so much a saint, one might have sworn he was a sort of sinner. But, rest his ashes now; he was an honourable rogue however. Tho’ it was a wicked trick, to make the girl consent to marry, any how, without permission from her parents; then thus, at last, to choose himself to tell it; ha! ha! ha! And yet ’tis pretty what he says about it too.

— “No, no, it would be a pity the poor girl should suffer for her father’s or her mother’s fault; for he, I know, was of a creditable family.

— “I’ll

— “ I’ll warrant her to be a girl of spirit, Sam; for she is half a bastard, (as we call all such, you know, who are propagated without your proper, fair, and legal consecration) and they are very seldom dull companions.

— “ It was, I find, a chamber-wedding; and such (tho’ an archbishop should officiate) now you must know, I never think legitimate.

— “ Who knows but thou mayst fare the better, boy, for thy first baulk: thou hast got the elder sister; tho’ thy friend Florello, indeed, has catched, it seems, the elder fortune; that is not quite so well, I own.

— “ However, she is thine, (or may, at least, be so) with all my heart, if you have both agreed upon this matter, as I suppose you have; for I am likely to have, I see, small comfort of a son, unless I take a daughter likewise.

— “ But

— “ But I should choofe, I think, to fee her, Sam; for I can fcarce remember any more of her than her bare name; nor had I that, if it had been a common one: I recollect, it pleafed my fancy much, when firft I heard it.

— “ I hope you have not told her (tho’) any thing I have faid; for, as I faid before, I knew but very little of her; and, fince we fee fhe is a match fit for thee, ’tis a bargain.”

Such was the altered tone of worldly Brutus! And, it may be imagined, that the impatience of a lover, turned it to his beft advantage; for he loft no time in forwarding a journey full of more temptation, to him, than that he had before determined on, in hopes (as he acknowledged afterwards) to foften his obdurate father to confent to make him happy with Cleone.

She, (as before has been infinuated in the beginning of thefe fheets) had al-
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ways entertained more favourable sentiments of him, than did her friend and sister, to whom he first made his addresses. Tho' it cannot positively be determined, whether Almira might not have seen the intrinsic merit in him, likewise, thro' all his imbibed folly, had his partiality for the other, then, in preference of herself, (which was Cleone's case) left observation more at leisure to approve him, unintimidated by the prudent apprehension of partiality.

Samander now, tho' he was master of a nearer prospect towards his approaching happiness, was still compelled, a little while, to practice in himself, part of that patience, which he had found it easier by much to preach. For, as Florello and his spouse were moving then to their own house; till things were all adjusted there, he could not influence his fair-one to appoint the happy morning!—

But
K

But they were scarcely settled, before Brutus insisted on it, that he would accompany his son to visit her;

That afternoon, Cleone and her sister happened to be both dressed, and just then going out (being engaged by an appointment) when they a-lighted; which, Samander seeing, was not so sorry for as he would certainly have been, in case he had visited alone. He seemed indeed to glow with apprehension, from his knowledge of his father;—a painful circumstance! but such a one, as he has many sharers in, no doubt; and he soon took an opportunity, civilly, to remind him, that they must not long detain the ladies.

Brutus's first address, (that is to say, after the usual compliments were over) was as follows to Cleone:

“Faith, Madam, my son here has no bad taste. I have often heard it said, indeed, that the best sheaf at harvest
K 2 might

might be known to be intended for, or chosen by, the parson. But, I beg pardon, (turning towards Almira) you'll excuse me, madam? We, country-gentlemen, who never visit London, are seldom fit for courtiers:—but you remember me of old; however, I hope your spouse is well?”

And then, resuming his discourse to poor Cleope, thus he proceeded:

“But, madam, I am come, in fact, to ask a favour or two of you, as you are soon, I find, to be my daughter; and, if I am not come too late, I think you wont refuse me, as it is the first I ever asked of you.

—“Now, you must know, I have a great dislike to white; you maidens much, I know, affect it: I suppose, because it represents your innocence! and yet, odso, that neither cannot be the case, methinks; because poor damsels, doing penance, to assure us of their want

of that, you know, do likewise always wear it.

—“ Now, as you may not, probably, have yet bespoke your wedding garb, I pray avoid that shadow of a colour. Let it be blue or red, I care not which : there is, in both of these, a good prognostick ! if we must look without, and not within a lady, for one. The first, it is said, will never stain ; that I approve the most, I must confess ; and 'tis, as one would say, your love will never fade. But, as for red, or rather your pale pink I think you call it, tho' at first tis pretty, and is sometimes an a-propo similitude ! that will, in time, fly off a little, I assure you : but then it represents so charmingly the maiden's blush, that I was ever fond of it.

—“ I, therefore beg, there may be, in your bridal dress, no white ; except, at most, a ribband or a pair of gloves ; yes, yes, I had forgot, I meant above the under petticoat.

— “You must excuse my freedom, madam. You will wonder at it less, the more you see and know me : and, if you really love my boy, (and if you do not, pray now do not have him) debate not very long about consenting to his happiness ; for fear he proves like many more of my poor black-legg’d chickens ; who, being kept in coop too long, when they were ready for the table, pined and lost all that flesh again, which I had been at much expence and taken care to give them.”

Cleone, during all this unaccountable discourse to her, looked very much ashamed, and made no answer. But, Samander, still more confounded, cried, For goodness sake, sir, say no more of this ; you make the lady blush ! who is not yet so well acquainted with you, as I am.

Blush, boy, why so the ladies should, replied he laughing. I always love to see it. This was my way whenever I

went

went a-courting, to prove if there was virtue; and it yet never failed me, tho' I have known some people laugh at it.

— I dare congratulate you now on your good choice, upon my own experience.

— And, as I now can see a smile succeed the blush, I know you will forgive me, madam, (to Cleone).

She told him, that, had she been more a stranger to him, than she really was, she could not then so well have answer'd for her doing so: but, as she was quite certain he had meant her no offence, none could by her be taken, upon this account.

Almira added, that they knew, of old, he loved to give a lady opportunity to prove, at least, one christian virtue, by thus offending her; which she could give one or two instances of, but would not then; and she believed, she said, he would excuse her.

Samander took that hint, and, jumping up, said, But I am sure we shall not be excused, if we detain you any longer, ladies. And then, turning towards his father, added, Come sir, now, if you please, I'll wait upon you.

And so, a visit, somewhat disagreeable to all (but him who made it so) concluded. Nor did they chuse another from him, sooner than they were obliged to bear it.—

And Cleone was not shagreened a little, shortly after, that he must be, she found, a party present at their nuptials.

However, she determined, wisely, to make it easy to her; well-knowing, that our best events, in life, must have some sort of counter-ballance, to keep down the pride of mortals.

But she so little relished Brutus for a father (tho' less angry with him than she might have been, had she been shewn that

that letter, some of the contents of which she had guessed at, that she postponed her wedding, in spite of all intreaty, till Samander had settled all things to be ready for their journey to his living; where they determined upon going the day succeeding it.

She likewise insisted, that her wedding might not be a public one; her story, notwithstanding her good fortune, having affected her with an allay of melancholy.

When all was ready for their reception in the country, as above, he would not rest till he prevailed on her to appoint the nearest day he could persuade her to, which was the same day seven-night, upon these conditions:

First, that she might be married where her sister was; and by that minister.

And next, that she should remain there, till their departure, as above.

Which

Which he consented to; and wished, as heartily as she did, that his father would oblige them by his absence; as he perceived with some concern, but no surprize, that he was greatly disagreeable, both to Cleone, and her sister. However, that was what his duty would not let him offer to propose.

Brutus would often let his conversation break the bounds of decency, as well as delicacy; which was no less distasteful to his son.

Yet, had not the obedient intended daughter forgot to oblige him in her dress; for she appeared, upon the morning of her nuptials, in a sky-blue sattin gown.

Her stomacher she had ornamented with white and silver ribband, such as adorned the Brussel's mob. She wore upon her head, and tied it beneath her chin, in the manner of a bridle.

—A double

—A double silver flounce ruffled her sleeves; and as she was genteel and amiable, with an exceeding fair complexion, this dress, indeed, seemed best adapted, of all others, to set her beauties off.

Samander's happy morning was now come, and the intended guests all ready; who were no more than young Amintor, and Teresa, with Florello, and his spouse; for Fidelio, and Amanda, who were invited, sent their excuse; the latter being indisposed.

Cleone, at her sister's wedding, had been engaged to promise, that those two young folks should be at hers, when ere she married. They were, indeed, not an improper bride-man and maid, as they were intended for each other, if their more than common partiality, observed from early infancy, should still remain the same.

The

double A —

The bridegroom, and his father, came. Samander's function, we well know, suffered no great addition to his apparel; therefore, I need to say but little on that subject. —

Only, that he took care, to have a gown, on the occasion, as rich, and bustling as a bishop's, to supply the want of bulk, that he was conscious of, as necessary properly to represent true dignity.

Nor did he want whatever aid his person could receive, that was more sprightly, and agreeable, than handsome, from a fair, flowing perriwig.

But Brutus, unfortunately for himself, notwithstanding he had taken care to be arrayed in the best manner he could think of, and had bestowed the broadest lace of gold, to ornament the waistcoat of his last new suit of buff-colour, had been compelled to come upon all fours that morning; and limped

limped out of his coach, supported by a crutch, and cane, into the parlour; being visited, just then, by a return of an old stubborn gout, which had attended him, in frequent fits, for many years.

He hobbled into the first chair, and puffed, and blowed for a few moments, to recover breath and ease enough to speak.

Then pointed toward Cleone, looking upon Samander, and cried out, There! look, Sam! and never take thy father's word again, if that prove not a kind, obliging wife! There! read it; for 'tis wrote upon that petticoat, or gown, I know not which 'tis call'd. P'faith, she is a charming, and good girl! and if thou dost not spoil her, thou'lt be a happy fellow.

Come, madam-daughter; I would come to thee, but as I move so slowly, 'twill loose time, and now, you know, 'tis very precious. If thou wilt come

and kiss me, mind ye me ! I'll answer, that my boy shall pay thee two for it ; nor shalt thou give long credit.

Samander smiled ; then rising, went and led Cleone to him, as one whose leave was necessary ; and presently informed them, that they, indeed, must waste no time.

Therefore, their coaches being ready, they proceeded to the church, which they were situated very near ; and as they went, Florello's and Almira's kind and chearful council aided Samander, to support Cleone's sinking spirits.

When they were at the altar, Brutus, unwillingly, was forced to yield his place, and let her brother be her father ; he standing in full need of both his hands himself.

However, still he stood too near them ; for while the minister was reading that part of the awful service, where it requires as follows :

If

If any person knows any lawful impediment, why, &c. they should reveal it;

A horrid twinge that moment seizing him, he lent forth such a hideous, O—as startled every one; but in particular the minister, who looked, that instant, off his book, imagining, no doubt, some person had intended, though in a new manner, to forbid the banns; and, till he discovered, by those wry faces Brutus was still making, what had been the cause, made a small stop, some moments, in the holy service.

This accident threw young Teresa, and Amintor, into so natural a propensity for laughing, that they could hardly keep it within proper bounds; and every person present seemed, just then, disposed that way, except poor Brutus, and the bride.

She trembled, somewhat more, indeed, than she did just before.

And

And even the bridegroom checked a rising smile; then shook his head a little, and looked much confounded.

While his father, by a frequent, painful, smothered grunt, discovered how he wished most heartily, 'twas over; for he was grown so bad, that they, with no small time and difficulty, got him back into his coach, which having in it only Amintor and Terefa, he had full room to throw himself on one whole side of it.

But he returned with spirits to determine, not to leave them that night, if it was possible for him to stay with prudence; that is, without the fear of being a tedious visiter.

And, having greater intervals of ease, he seemed to be intending to pour forth a choice collection of such wit, as he thought most adapted for the day.

And

And first, when he was seated, he told the bridegroom, that he should observe his spouse's love of truth: see there, said he, one of her ornaments must hence be your instructor! She knew there could be no oeconomy in wedlock, if that bridle were omitted; those ends are just left long enough, you see, for you to hold them.

She smiled, and thanked him, for so kindly remembering the spur, as well as bridle, that otherwise, she said, might have been still forgotten.

Samander (blushing) added, that he thought, as he had taken so much notice of her dress, he should have praised and remarked most that part of it wherein he had been most obliged; tho' he remembered it had not been lost, he said, upon him, when he first came in. However, after this, it cannot be denied, I think, that you can, sir, the best of any, make a bride look *blue* on all her company.

Brutus was much diverted by this pun.—

But young Arminor, who had listen'd and observ'd him with a visible dislike, asked him, in a low modest voice and manner, If he had recollected, when he chose that colour for the lady, that when it was joined with black, it was called the devil's mourning?

The odd old gentleman, at that, turn'd himself, cautiously, half round upon his seat, and squinted at him, with his eyes half turned upwards, (as tho' he wished he had not left his spectacles behind him in his other coat, that he might view him better) and cried, Why, how now, young one, is it you? A pretty malepert one, truly! But boys, egad, in these days, peck at the old ones, while the shell, as we may say, still sticks upon them.

—If thou wert mine, I would send thee to the bar; either to find some

more

more assurance, or an excuse and opportunity for using what thou hast got already.

Florella then replied, that all the merit must be his (meaning Brutus, whom he addressed himself to) in case Amintor had acquired such, for he was reckoned modest, even to a fault; if there was any fault very conspicuous in him; and, if you doubt it, sir, continued he, look now upon him.

Brutus did so, and, laughing loudly at the blush he had occasioned on his cheeks, replied, (looking first tho' upon Terresa, who sat next to Amintor, and then again on him) Ay! ay! and there I see so kind a fellow-feeling for him, that I'll be hanged if those two pretty simpletons don't come together by and by.

But, while they both were made to look extremely silly by this speech of his, he was compelled to look more so himself, and cry, (at the conclusion of

more

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another frightful O—— that lasted almost half a minute) Come, girls, (odso, ladies I meant to say) I hope your dinner is not to be long in coming; for, if it is, I must, I find, be gone without it, as I grow so very bad.

Florello whispered then to his Almira, who went and gladly hastened it, for they expected small amendment of his manners from his pain's increase. And, when it was ready, he seemed to swear revenge upon his pain by eating, resting only when obliged to roar.

But finding many dishes there he neither understood or relished, he requested of Florello, that, when he came to the baptizing of his first-born son (for daughters he would never answer for) there might be something sollider, than soops and minced meats, on his table. But, if it should fall out at Christmas, he would not, indeed, except against plumb-pies and pottage; adding, that, from a boy, he always hated every other sort of spoon meat.

He

He likewise (well remembering, that to dilute sufficiently, is necessary for the assisting properly, digestion) toiled down the wine so fast, that, for some time before the second course was taken off, he bowed most gratefully, full often, to the bounteous board, (tho' neither of his eyes could see it) and then fell gradually back, against his chair, in profound sleep, tho' not a quiet one; for, had there been some music in his snoring, (as his mouth kept so much open) they might have thought he had been singing to celebrate the day.

But his nap was of a short duration; pain roused him quickly; and he then bawled out, (while he rubbed hard his eyes to open them) O, Sam! see if my rogues have dined.—Go, bid them put the horses to; I'll stay no longer with you when this bottle is out: for now, I see, I shall spoil sport, instead of making any. I shall be best at my own habitation. Yet I am sorry thus to leave you to, so soon; but I shall scarce

get home again before it is dark, as my poor jades must only gently crawl along with me, or I shall have my coach laid hold of, by some officious knave or other) to find out what sort of murder is doing in it.

And thus, they soon got rid of him—

And it was observed, that poor Samander, when he returned from helping him into the coach, had hazarded rubbing the skin off from his hands, (out of pure honest gratitude of heart that he was safely landed there) if, luckily, joy had not timely came to their relief, by sending him, in the same minute, to employ them better in embracing his Cleone.

Their small assembly now seemed truly happy, and chearfully-agreeable discourse took place, with several songs; which, as the bridegroom was extremely fond of singing, he had insisted should be sung, to celebrate their wedding;
since

since the bride, he said, had been obliged in having such a private one, as had excluded musick, or a dance, amongst them.

Almira, being first pressed to favour them, gave them the following song, by her Florello's earnest desire :

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IV.

O! ~~Just Africa!~~ tell me, why
 Is virtue ~~soft~~ distress'd;
 While vice triumphant, standing by,
 Proclaims thy name a jest?

II.

Or is thy empire all above,
 Regardless of our fate?
 O! let us, mortals, share thy love,
 To bless our earthly state!

III.

Or, is the mind by misery try'd,
 As gold is prov'd by fire?
 If so, let patience be our guide,
 Content our souls inspire.

IV. He,

IV.

*He, who can arm his mind with these,
 Shall in a cell be blest;
 How mean soever it shall please;
 And yield the sweetest rest.*

V.

*While palaces unblest we see,
 'Midst all the pomp of art;
 'Till patience and content agree
 To deck the monarch's heart.*

Samander

Samander seemed much pleased, both with the meaning of the words, and manner of his sister's singing them.— He told his bride, that if she had not got that song by heart, he should insist upon her learning it; for she must favour him by singing it sometimes.

She, smiling, told him, that she hoped he had no bad design, concerning the trying too far that patience, which he began so soon to find it necessary for her to learn the practice of.

Come, come, (returned Florello) pray, good sister, be not too sharp upon him, on that subject. You know it is in my power to silence you, by telling him, before your face, that he has innocently brought that virtue in you to its trial before now, tho' he knew nothing of it.— Ah, ah, Samander, there was meaning in the dream you once related to us.—

You will not love her less, I know, when you are well assured she did not hate

I have hate

hate you then, for having never told her how you loved her. And, therefore, as it now, I think, will make no breach in delicacy, I will give you plainly the interpretation of it.

He then proceeded to inform him of her fainting, upon seeing him led from the coach (as he expressed it) that day he had been overturned; which need not be again repeated.

Cleone cried, Pray, brother, go no further; you are out already; for I am sure it was the chariot.

This most convincing proof, of her esteem for him, seemed not a little to increase the joy of that fond bridegroom; tho' the bride was somewhat angry with her brother, for so soon beginning to tell tales.

But then, Almira told her, if she would not forgive Florello for it, she could presently remove her anger to another quarter.

— I have

— I have been silent hitherto, take notice, sister, (added she) but I can speak, you know, upon that subject, to the same effect as he has, if you provoke me to it. If not, I'll keep the secret till you give me leave to tell it, and may not redder quite so much, perhaps, at hearing of it.

'Tis mighty pretty, truly! (cried Cleone). Pray, sister, is it quite six weeks since you were married? I think 'tis not. You are very well improved considering; and you might even as well have spoke it all. These kind, half-speakers, are the most provoking of all tell-tales! for, while they seem to favour you, by keeping back some trifling single secret, they imply, at least, a dozen which they never were possessed of.

Just then Amintor (who, tho' silent, had long seemed to look and listen with delight) was forced to take his leave, doubly concerned, as his mamma's indisposition

disposition was the cause of it; which reason only, could have prevented that worthy couple's being present, as was laid before.

This youth was equally beloved, and, by his tenderness and duty, deserving of the great affection both his parents had for him.

Terresa sent the longest look the window would afford her, after him; and, drawing up, likewise, a longer breath than usual, told the bride, She thought, for her part, she had nothing but bad luck; that all her wedding-visitors were either forced to leave her so, or keep away.

This made them all laugh heartily; who fathom'd better than, perhaps, she could herself, the depth from whence her whole concern arose: which she, a little consciously perceiving, ran out ashamed immediately.

And

And now, the bridegroom could not help exulting, at his sincerely-felt and unexpected happiness, in the discovery of his bride's alliance. But, seeing her (at that discourse) look down, and hearing a faint inadvertent sigh, he took her hand, and gently pressing it, declared, he would be satisfied from whence that naughty sigh proceeded.

She told him, it was, indeed, a due one; for it had sprung from the reflection, that her joy, in such a lov'd alliance, was founded on a worthy mother's sorrow ! Nor could she help regretting that the most solemn, sacred tie, was not performed at church, between her parents ; for that would have compleated her felicity in finding such a sister.

That generous and dutiful reflection, (returned Samander) is worthy, I allow, of my Cleone : but now, as thou hast paid that just, yet amiable debt of duty, let other thoughts, as worthy, take their lasting seat in thy sweet mind. And then

then thou wilt applaud the motive of that noble spirit, tho' it led her wrong, that could so much atone for former failure in her duty, by penitence and self-denial, of the offered hand again of him her soul so much approved, upon such generous principles! and find more reason to commend, and even be proud of such a one, than of a mother, like too many, (more esteemed by the world, perhaps, than thine would be) who might have only thought on self; and hurried, with even a base reluctant cool betrayer, (which indeed thy father was not) to the altar, in order to restore lost honour, at the expence, or hazard, of future peace on both sides.

Yes, my Cleone, think henceforth, without another sigh, that poor Parthenia died a happy martyr (if not truly in the cause of virtue, yet a sacrifice) to duty, and faithful to her vows! as was thy father.

And great allowance must be made, I really think, when youthful hearts have so been led astray, as theirs both were.

if older heads, and such as should of course be wiser, point them out first the road in love, and want to call them back again, when they are gone too far to hear them.

I would not say so much, I own, in every company, considering my function; nor before one of such an age as young Teresa; but, from my heart, I think, Parthenia's soul (tho' certainly it condescended in one incident too weakly) rose nobly ever after. And some have had the honours of a saint, who might not more, for dutifulness and penitence, have merited that title;—for she died their martyr!

Florello heartily concurred with his opinion: and Almira told her sister, that she now could see an innate reason, which before could never be so well accounted for, why she was always seized with a more than usual melancholy, whenever any such unhappy moving stories had been told before her.

Cleone

Cleone answered, that she owned they always gave her pain beyond description.

To which Samander said, Who can account for that? but, I may add, indeed, what mortal can sufficiently acknowledge, or admire, the amazing depths of nature, operating thro' the mighty influence of its vast origin, never to be enough adored? I have not impudence, or vanity, so great, to dare pretend I can attempt and execute that subject worthily; tho' it is the most extensive of all other.

But yet, I hope, my sweet Cleone, I shall not be found the most ungrateful amongst mortals, for those blessings I am allowed to be a sharer in; and a good wife I'll rank, on earth, as greatest of them all.

And thus they entertained their hours till supper; and, after that was over, Almira, who was somewhat melancholy,

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told

told her brother, that she desired he would compose a treatise for her to read, (not hear him preach) when they came down to see them in the North, (as soon they had agreed to do) it being a consolation that he owed her,—upon the following words, (not to be called a text, but motto, if he pleased)

Our very wishes give us not our wish.

He thought a moment, and then told her, he could not, truly, recollect them in the bible.

To which she smiling, answered, No, indeed, they are not there; but you will find them in a poem, I am fond of, called Night-Thoughts, by Dr. Young. That line I always was particularly pleased with, tho' it is full of beauties thro' the whole work; and have imagin'd often, that it would make a good foundation for a fine discourse, both moral and religious, for the closet of the admirers of serious contemplation.—

Now,

Now, we, so lately having had a wish (we ever took to be a fruitless one) so wonderfully gratified! for often has Cleone wished, with me, we had been sisters; and, just when we have found that covered, that dear alliance! to be forced to separate, alas! to such a distance. This, sure, may furnish one example of a million, which might otherwise, perhaps, be met with in this world, how much just sense is comprehended in those eight short words.

I own it just, replied Samander, and admire the line extremely, madam; but, if I promise to oblige you, as far as I am able, by making them the subject of such a treatise, which might, no doubt, produce a very good one in some hands, it shall be but on one condition:—That you permit no more of those dull clouds of future parting recollections, premature, to darken present happy sunshine.

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No,

No, my Almira, (cried Florello) don't you know that we are under mutual articles, to make, reciprocally, once a year, a visit to each other, of at least a month, if 'tis not your own faults? And all the intervening time will pass away in pleasing expectation! And, I assure you, expectation is not so insipid a delight, as the impatient often think it.—

Tho' you, Samander, now I think again, do not deserve that I should take your part, for having thus resolutely determined upon leaving us to-morrow, tho' it is more Cleone's fault, in fact, than yours.

However, in revenge to both, I'll pay you with an ugly simile.

—Pray, did you never, in your rural walks, observe a fly and watchful kite skim round and round over, perhaps, an honest farmer's yard, and fix his eyes upon a chosen chicken, which he no sooner makes his own, than up again
he

he swiftly rises with it, and both are presently gone out of sight together?

An admirable simile indeed! returned Samander, laughing heartily; and one for which I'll not forgive you, brother, unless you bribe me with that song you made upon your lady. You must not, sure, expect to be excused, when she has favoured me.

Florello told him, it was not very usual for the poet to turn ballad-singer likewise; however, he would endeavour to oblige him.

He then sung the following words:

Alas! what pain affects my breast?

What makes my eyes decline their rest?

My sweet Almira! canst thou tell?

Those eyes too lovely, know too well.

*Can beams, which shed such radiant fire,
As must the softest flames inspire,*

Conceal a heart of frozen snow?

O, teach me, love! to make it glow.

In all, but love, extremes like these,

By meeting, oft afford some ease;

But nothing can relieve my flame,

'Till lov'd Almira shares the same.

Samander thanked him, and desired to know, if this was wrote before he had made his passion known to her?

No, no, indeed, replied Florello, long after that; but when, alas! it was a hopeless one! as, by the wildness of the sense, you may perceive.

He then, at his request, related to him what had occasioned him to be an exile from her favour; which has been here before related.

Well, cried Samander, (much admiring the generous and spirited humanity, as he expressed it, of the kind female physician) we have both, I see, had

had many briars to pass thro', before we gained possession of our fair roses! But it was quite right: now, all is over, we may own it willingly, seldom can any one before. Life's difficulties, like a rugged road, make us receive a double pleasure when we find a smooth one.—

Yet, were we always to have smooth ones, it is probable we might, ere long, grow weary of them; and sleep, thro' indolence, upon our journey.

—Not that I think sleep is a thing to be despised by mortals, I assure you, it we indulge it not immoderately. Nor should good hours, likewise, ever be thus overlooked, tho' in good company;—good health forbids it.

You must excuse the liberty I take; I am, you know, both spouse and pastor: therefore, away, my sweet Cleone! you must lead the way, I see, to night; or we may sit here, talking, till the lark bids us good-morrow, or till they tell us that the chariot is come.—

Our friends, you know, should never lead us out, (tho' some, so called, perhaps, may wish us gone) and, if I sleep too long, to make amends for this late sitting up; Florello will be fore to laugh at me, for setting bad examples of bad hours,

Besides, indeed, we must set out quite early for my father's; or, take my word for it, some tattling knave will send the drums to storm thy pretty senses.

— Come, come, my dear Cleone, go I meant to say. If thou stay'st many minutes longer, I'll treat thee like a Turkish lady; and, fancying that I am the grand seignor, seek first my couch of rest myself, and in due state expect thee.

Then you shall only wait of course (returned the bride) till I am a sultaneſs, before I'll condescend to follow you. However, for the omen's sake, I'll not begin with disobedience to you, if you

— will

will set me an example first; as follows:

You now must promise me, to bring me back to the same place you take me from, if you should be obliged (much longer than is now intended) to postpone your further journey, either by your father's indisposition or perswasion. A day or two I will not mind; but longer—

—But longer, said Samander, (interrupting her) you shall not stay. And now confirm the article yourself, or I am free remember.

Come, sister, cried Almira, he begins, I think, to threaten. I like not such examples; they may be dangerous for ought I know. We must be gone, I see, or more of this may follow.

Terresa then ran to the bride, and took her hand, saying, in a half-whisper, I thought all folks, when they were married, were to obey their husbands, as they promised at the church; I am sure my cousin Almira does.—

At

At this Cleone smiled, and rose, and suffered her to lead her up to her apartment, (while her sister led the way) where she insisted upon having full and whole right to undress and wait upon the bride herself, (making the chamber-maid, who there attended, stand at a proper distance with the pincushion she held) declaring, one should not be stuck upon it for all the world.

And, when she had finished, with much care and many simpers, her pleasing task, (for it was a new one) and waited on the bride to bed, she stoop'd, and, in great haste and joy, picked up the scattered pins, which she had just before thrown, one by one, over Cleone's head; and, laughing at her prize, ran then away to bed herself.

Almira, having took her leave, and kissed her sister, went down stairs; and then she, and Florello, shewed the bridegroom which was his chamber, as they went to theirs.

But

The

The morning following, Cleone, mindful of Samander's fears for her, concerning the expected drums, took care to rise the first, and she was dressed, in order for her journey, extremely early; but desired her spouse to call her brother and sister up, while she was dressing, lest they should sleep too long: having ever had a more than common dislike to all that mercenary sort of uproar, in the shape and sound of joy; which seldom fails to pay its compliments, on such occasions, to all alike.

And now, alas! the sun-shine of her nuptials was to be over-cast, a little while, to give due place to a soft shower of parting tears; whose felt reciprocal effect, Almira proved.

Nor could the tenderest persuasions of their obliging husbands prove effectual; tho' they both made use of arguments founded on duty, reason, wisdom and philosophy; and love! that often is too powerful for them all.

But

But human expectation is a very miser ; eager of more and more felicity ; yet most unwilling to relinquish, or even lend the smallest part of it.

These tender sisters, believing it would be long before they could, in person, entertain each other with pleasing verbal conversation ; now, while they had the opportunity, were silent ; and seldom more than, now and then, a kind intelligible sob, saluted one another till they parted. But then it suffered utterance to both, like inspiration, in that instant the chariot drove away ; who said, or seem'd to mean to say, (in broken accents) Farewell ! do let me see you once again, if possible. I charge you write to me, and very often ! (from both in the same moment).

F I N I S.